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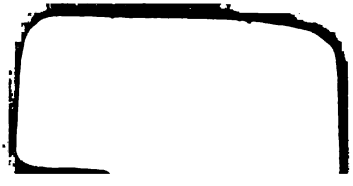

THROUGH STAINED GLASS

A NOVEL

BY

GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN
Author of "Home"

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THROUGH STAINED GLASS

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THROUGH STAINED GLASS

CHAPTER I

IN 1866 the American minister at Rio de Janeiro turned from the reality of a few incongruous and trouble-breeding Kentucky colonels, slouched-hatted and frock-coated, wandering through the unfamiliar streets of the great South American capital, and saw a nightmare. There is a touch of panic in the despatch which he sent to Mr. Seward at a time when both secretary and public were held too closely in the throes of reconstruction to take alarm at so distant a chimera. Agents of the Southern States, wrote the minister, claimed that not thousands of families, but a hundred thousand families, would come to Brazil.

As a matter of fact, this exodus, when it took place, was so small that it failed to raise a ripple on the social pool of the Western Hemisphere. But to the self-chosen few who suffered shipwreck and privation, financial loss from their already depleted store, disaster to their Utopian dreams, and a great void in their hearts where

once had been love of country, it became a tragedy—the tragedy of existence.

The ardor that led a small band of irreconcilables to gather their households and their household goods about them and flee from a personal oppression, as had their ancestors before them, was destined to be short lived. From the first, fate frowned upon their enterprise. They looked for calm seas and favorable winds, but they found storms and shipwreck. Their scanty resources were calculated to meet the needs of only the crudest life, but upon the threshold of their goal they fell into the red-tape trammels of a civilization older than their own. Where they looked for a free country, a wilderness flowing with milk and honey, which in their ignorance they imagined unpeopled, they found the squatter had been intrenched since the Jesuit fathers and their following explored the continent four centuries before. Finally, they believed themselves to be the vanguard of a horde, but, once in the breach, they found there was no following host.

Most of those who had the means reversed their flight. Others, with nothing left but their broken pride, sought aid from the government they abhorred, and were given a free passage back in returning men-of-war. But when the reflux had waned and died, there was still a residue of half a hundred families, most of whom were so destitute that they could not reach the coast. With them

stayed a very few who were held by their premature investments or by a deeper loyalty or a greater pride. Among the latter was the head of the divided house of Leighton.

The Reverend Orme Leighton was one of those to whom the war had brought a double portion of bitterness, for the Leightons of Leighton, Virginia, had fought not alone against the North, but against the North and the Leightons of Leighton, Massachusetts.

To the Reverend Orme Leighton, a schism in the church would have meant nothing unless it came to the point of cracking heads; but a schism in governmental policy, which placed the right to govern one's self and own black chattel in the balance, found him taking sides from the first, thundering out from the pulpit, supported by text and verse, the divine right of personal dominion by purchase, and in superb contradiction voicing the constitutional right to self-government. When the day of words was past, he did not wait for the desperate cry of the South in her later need. Abandoning gown and pulpit for charger and saber, he was of the first to rally, of the last to muster out. Nor at the end of the long struggle did he find solace in the knowledge that he had fought a good fight. To him more than the South had fallen. God had withheld his hand from the just cause, and Leighton had fought against Leighton!

It was characteristic of the Reverend Orme Leighton

that the rancor which came with defeat was not visited upon those members of his clan who had fought against him. But for that very reason it was all the more poignantly directed against that vague entity, the North. Never, while life lasted, would he bow to the dominion of a tyranny, much more, of a tyranny which, by dividing the Leightons, had in a measure forced neutrality upon the gods.

Leighton House, Virginia, found a ready and fitting purchaser in one of the Leightons of Massachusetts. With the funds thus provided, the Reverend Orme Leighton moved, lock, stock, and barrel, six thousand miles to the south. He settled at San Paulo, where he bought for a song a considerable property on the outskirts of the city. He rented, besides, a large building in the center of the town, and established therein the Leighton Academy. Here he labored single handed until his worth as an instructor became known; then the sudden prosperity of the venture drove him to engage an ever-increasing staff. The academy developed rapidly into a recognized local institution. The first material revenue from the successful school was applied to building a fitting home on the property bought for a song.

The character of this new Leighton House, which was never known as Leighton House, but acquired the name of Consolation Cottage by analogy with the Street of the

Consolation near which it stood, was as different as could well be both from the prevailing local style of architecture and from the stately colonial type dear to the heart of every Virginian. The building was long and low, with sloping roofs of flat French tiles. A broad veranda bordered it on three sides. The symmetry of the whole was saved from ugliness by a large central gable the overhanging porch of which cast a deep and friendly shadow over the great front door and over the wide flights of steps that led down to the curving driveway.

In that luxuriant clime the new house did not long remain bare. A clambering wistaria, tree-like geraniums, a giant fuchsia and trellised rose-vines soon embowered the verandas, while, on the south side, English ivy was gradually coaxed up the bare brick wall. This medley of leaf and bloom gave to the whole house that air of friendliness and homeliness that marks the shrine of the Anglo-Saxon's household gods the world over.

Such was the nest that the Reverend Orme built by the sweat of his brow to harbor his little family, which, at the beginning of this history, consisted of himself; Ann Leighton, his wife; and Mammy, black as the ace of spades without, white within.

CHAPTER II

ANN SUTHERLAND LEIGHTON was one of those rare religionists that occasionally bloom in a most unaccountable manner on a family tree having its roots in the turf rather than clinging to Plymouth Rock. Isaac Sutherland, her father, had been knowing in horse-flesh, and would have looked askance on the Reverend Orme Leighton as a suitor had he not also been knowing in men. The truth was that in Leighton the man was bigger than the parson, and to the conceded fact that all the world loves a lover he added the prestige of the less-bandied truth that all the world loves a fighter. He, also, knew horse-flesh. He finally won Ann's father over on the day when Ike Sutherland learned to his cost that the Reverend Orme could discern through the back of his head that distension of the capsular ligament of the hock commonly termed a bog spavin.

Ann did not share her husband's extreme views. It was a personal loyalty that had brought her uncomplaining to a far country, unbuoyed by the Reverend Orme's dreams of a new state, but seeking with an inward fervidness some scene of lasting peace wherewith to blot

out the memory of long years of turmoil and wholesale bereavement.

To her those first years in Consolation Cottage were long—long with the weight of six thousand miles from home. Then, with the suddeness of answered prayer, a light came into her darkness. He was named Shenton. Mammy's broad, homesick face broke into an undying smile. "Sho is mo' lak ole times, Mis' Ann, havin' a young Marster abeout." And when, two years later, on a Christmas day, Natalie was born, Mammy mixed smiles with tears and sobbed, "Oh, Mis' Ann, sho is mo' an' *mo'* lak ole times."

She, too, had her clinging memories of halls, now empty, that echoed once to the cries and gurgling laughter of a race in full flower.

As Ann sat one evening on the embowered veranda looking away to the north, a child within the circle of each arm, the old aching in her breast was stilled. The restless Leighton paused in his stride to gaze through fiery, but gloomy, eyes upon his fair-haired baby daughter and his son, pale, crowned with dark curls, and cried, with a toss of his own dark mane: "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them!"

This realization of the preciousness of children in adversity paved the way for the reception of one who was to come to them from under the shadow of a family

cloud, a certain mysterious personage of tender years, Lewis Leighton, by name.

For weeks the name of Lewis Leighton had been whispered about the house, first by the grown-ups and finally, when the Reverend Orme and his wife had come to the great decision, by the children. The children knew nothing of the great decision nor did they know the sources of their sudden joy. Their spirits were reaching out to clasp this new thread in life at an age when all new threads are golden.

On the appointed day the Reverend Orme went to the nearest seaport to meet the youthful voyager and convoy him home. As evening drew near, great was the excitement at Consolation Cottage. To Natalie and to Shenton, the sudden arrival of an entirely new brother, not in swaddling-clothes, but handed down ready-made from the shelf, was an event that loomed to unusual proportions. At last the great gate swung open, and a cab rattled its leisurely way up the drive.

In an instant the children were on their feet, jumping up and down and clapping their hands. "Mother," shouted Shenton, "they 're coming!" Little Natalie clambered in stumbling haste up the steps and clutched Mrs. Leighton's skirts. "Muvver," she cried, in an agony of ecstasy, "they 're *coming!*"

"Yes, yes, dear; I see. Oh, look how you' ve rumpled your dress! What will Lewis say to that? Come,

Shenton, give mother your hand." Slowly she led them down the steps, her eyes fixed on the approaching cab.

The Reverend Orme sprang out and up to meet them. He kissed his wife and children. Shenton clung to his arm.

"O Dad," he cried, "did n't you bring him?"

"Bring him? I should say I did. Here, step out, young man."

A chubby face above a blouse, a short kilt and fat legs, appeared from the shadows of the cab. Grave eyes passed fearlessly over the group on the steps until they settled on the broad black face of Mammy.

"Bad nigger!"

Mrs. Leighton gasped and arrested herself in the very movement of welcome. Mammy's genial face assumed a terrible scowl, her white eyes bulged, and her vast arms went suddenly akimbo.

"Wha' 's that yo' say, yo' young Marster?" she thundered.

"Go—go—*good* nigger," stuttered the chubby face and smiled. With that he was swept from the cab into Mrs. Leighton's arms, and Mammy, grinning from ear to ear, caught him by one fat leg and demanded in soft negro tones:

"Wha' fo' you call yo' mammy 'bad niggah,' young Marster? Ho! ho! 'Go—go—*good* niggah!' Did yo' hea' him, Mis' Ann?"

Shenton and Natalie jumped up and down, with cries of "Please, Mother," and "Muvver, oh, *please!*" Mrs. Leighton set Lewis on his feet between them. Shenton held out his hand. "How d' ye."

"How do do," replied Lewis, gravely. Natalie was plucking at his arm. He turned to her. They were almost of a size, but to Natalie he towered an inch above her. She held up her lips, and he kissed them. Then they stood and stared at each other. Natalie's short forefinger found its way to her mouth.

"My dwess is wumpled," she said.

"I got a dog at home," declared Lewis—"a *big* dog."

CHAPTER III

TO Natalie, Shenton, and Lewis the scant twenty acres that surrounded Consolation Cottage was a vast demesne. Even on a full holiday one could choose one's excursions within its limits. From the high-plumed wall of bamboos that lined Consolation Street, through the orange-grove, across the hollow where were stable and horses, cows and calves, then up again to the wood on the other hillside—ah, that was a journey indeed, never attempted in a single day. They chose their playground. To-day the bamboos held them, to-morrow the distant grove, where were pungent fruits, birds'-nests, fantastic insects, and elusive butterflies and moths.

Then there was the brier-patch, with its secret chamber. By dint of long hours of toil and a purloined kitchen-knife they had tunneled into a clearing in the center of the thicket. Of all their retreats, this one alone had foiled their watchful overseers. Here was held, undetected, many an orgy over stolen fruit.

Nor did they have to seek far for a realm of terror. Behind the brier-patch was the priest's wall. Over it was wafted the fragrance of unknown flowers and of

strange fruits—and the barking of a fierce dog. With the same kitchen-knife they pried loose a brick and slipped it out. They took turns at peeking through this tiny window on a strange world. What ecstasy when first they glimpsed the flat-hatted, black-robed figure strolling in the wondrous garden! Then terror seized them, for the quick-eyed priest had seen the hole, and before they could flee his toe was in it, and his frowning face, surmounted by the flaring hat, popped above the wall and glared down upon them.

"Do you hear my dog?" whispered the priest.

It was Natalie, trembling with fright, who answered, feeling a certain kinship for anything in skirts.

"Yeth, I do."

"Well," whispered the priest, his face twitching in the effort to look stern, "he eats little children." With that he dropped from view.

Lewis and Shenton stared at each other. Natalie began to cry. Lewis picked up the brick and slipped it back into place. Shenton helped him wedge it in with twigs; then all three stole away, to break into giggles and laughter when distance gave them courage.

Natalie and Lewis had another terror, unshared by Shenton. Manoel, the Portuguese gardener, who lived in a little two-room house in the hollow, had nothing but scowls for them. They feared him with the instinctive fear of children, but Shenton was his friend. Did any

little tiff arise, Shenton was off to see Manoel. He knew the others were afraid to follow. Sometimes Manoel took him to his little house.

To Lewis this strange friendship was the one cloud in childhood's happy sky. He could not have defined what he felt. It was jealousy mixed with hurt pride—jealousy of the hated Manoel, hurt pride at the thought that Shenton went where he could not follow.

One day Shenton had been gone an hour. Lewis had seen him with Manoel. He knew he was in Manoel's house. What were they doing? Lewis turned to Natalie.

"I am going to Manoel's house. Stay here."

Natalie stared at him with wide eyes.

"O, Lewis," she cried after him, "are n't you *'fraid?*"

Lewis crawled stealthily to a back window. He stood on tiptoe and tried to look in. His eyes were just below the level of the window-sill. He dragged a log of wood beneath the window and climbed upon it. For a long time he kept his face glued against one of the little square panes of glass.

He forgot fear. In the room which the window commanded was a broad, rough table, and Manoel was seated on a bench before it, leaning forward, his long arms outstretched along its edge. The table was pushed almost against the wall, and in its center stood Shenton,

laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. His curly hair was damp and clung to his white forehead. His blouse was soiled, his kilt awry. One short stocking had fallen down over his shoe. Manoel was also laughing, but silently.

Lewis did not have to wait long to divine the source of mirth, for Shenton soon essayed to walk the length of the table. Lifting his arm, he pointed along a crack, and swung one leg around to take a first step. But he seemed unable to place his foot as he wished. He reeled and fell in a giggling ball, which Manoel saved from rolling to the floor.

Shrieks of laughter, deadened by the closed window, came from the child, and Manoel's broad shoulders shook with enjoyment. He stood Shenton on his feet, and held him till he got his balance; then the play began again. Now Lewis felt fear steal over him, yet he could not go away. There was something inexpressibly comical in the scene, but it was not this that held him. A strange terror had seized him. Something was the matter with Shenton. Lewis did not know what it was.

Suddenly Shenton's mood changed to sullen stupor, and Manoel, whose gait was also unsteady, picked him up and carried him to a spigot, where he carefully unbuttoned the child's waist and soaked his head in cold water. The charm was broken. Lewis fled.

CHAPTER IV

ROUTINE is the murderer of time. Held by the daily recurring duties of her household, Ann Leighton awoke with a gasp to the day that Natalie's hair went into pigtails and the boys shed kilts for trousers. At the evening hour she gathered the children to her with an increased tenderness. Natalie, plump and still rosy, sat in her lap; Shenton, a mere wisp of a boy, his face pale with a pallor beyond the pallor of the tropics, pressed his dark, curly head against her heart. Her other arm encircled Lewis and held him tight, for he was prone to fidget.

They sat on the west veranda and watched the sun plunge to the horizon from behind a bank of monster clouds. Before them stretched a valley, for Consolation Cottage was set upon a hill. Beyond the valley, and far away, rose a line of hills. Suddenly that line became a line of night. Black night seized upon all the earth; but beyond there arose into the heavens a light that was more glorious than the light of day. A long sea of gold seemed to slope away ever so gently, up and up, until it lost itself beneath the slumberous mass of clouds that curtained its farther shore. Here and there

within the sea hung islets of cloud, as still as rocks in a waveless ocean.

Natalie stretched out her hand, with chubby fingers outspread, and squinted between the black bars they made against the light.

"Mother, what 's all that?"

Mrs. Leighton was silent for a moment. The children looked up expectantly into her face, but she was not looking down at them. Her gaze was fixed upon the afterglow.

"Why," she said at last, "it 's a painting of heaven and earth. You see the black plain that stretches away and away? That 's our world, so dark, so full of ruts, so ugly; but it is the rough plain we all must travel to reach the shore of light. When life is over, we come to the end of night—over there. Then we sail out on the golden sea."

"Are those islands?" asked Lewis, pointing to the suspended cloudlets.

"Yes, islands."

"D' you see that biggest one—the one with a castle and smoke and trees?" continued Lewis. "That 's the one *I 'm* going to sail to."

"Me, too," said Natalie.

"No, Natalie, you can't. Not to that one, because you're littlest. You must sail to that littlest one 'way, 'way over there." Lewis pointed far to the south.

Natalie shook her head solemnly.

"No. I 'll sail to the big island, too."

"And you, dear?" said Mrs. Leighton to Shenton, looking down at his motionless head. Shenton did not answer. He was held by a sudden, still, unhealthy sleep.

Mrs. Leighton let Lewis go, pushed Natalie gently from her lap, and gathered her first-born in her arms.

"Run to mammy, children," she said.

Holding the sleeping Shenton close to her, she turned a troubled face toward the afterglow. The golden sea was gone. There was a last glimmer of amber in the heavens, but it faded suddenly, as though somewhere beyond the edge of the world some one had put out the light. Night had fallen.

Mrs. Leighton carried her boy into the house. She stopped at her husband's study door.

"Orme, are you there?" she called. "Please come."

There was the sound of a chair scraping back. The door was flung open. Leighton looked from Ann's face to her burden, and his own face paled.

"Again?" he asked.

"O, Orme," cried Ann, "I'm frightened. What is it, Orme? Dr. MacDonald must come. Send for him. We *must* know!"

The Reverend Orme took the boy from her arms and

carried him into a spare bedroom. He laid him down. Shenton's head fell limply to one side upon the pillow. The pillow was white, but not whiter than the boy's face.

MacDonald's gruff voice was soon heard in the hall.

"Not one of the bairns, Mammy? Young Shenton, eh?" He came into the room and sat down beside the boy. He felt his pulse, undid his waist, listened to his heart and lungs. The doctor shook his head and frowned. "Nothing extra-ordinary—nothing." Then he brought his face close to the boy's mouth, closer and closer.

The doctor sank back in his chair. His shrewd eyes darted from boy to father, then to the mother.

"Do not be alarmed," he said to Mrs. Leighton; "the lad is pheesically sound. He will awake anon." The doctor arose, and stretched his arms. "Eh, but I 've had a hard day. Will ye be sae gude as to give me a glass of wine, Mistress Leighton?"

Ann started as though from a trance.

"Wine, Doctor?" she stammered. "I 'm sorry. We have no wine in the house."

"Not even a drop of whisky?"

Ann shook her head.

"Nae whisky in the medicine-chest, nae cooking sherry in the pantry? Weel, weel, I must be gaeing."

And without a look at Ann's rising color or the Reverend Orme's twitching face the doctor was gone.

The Reverend Orme fixed his eyes upon his wife.

"When the boy awakes," he said, "not a word to him. Send him to my study." Ann nodded. As the door closed, she fell upon her knees beside the bed.

An hour later the study door opened. Shenton entered. His father was seated, his nervous hands gripping the arms of his chair. On the desk beside him lay a thin cane. He motioned to his son to stand before him.

"My boy," he said, "tell me each thing you have done to-day."

There was a slight pause.

"I have forgotten what I did to-day," answered Shenton, his eyes fixed on his father's face.

"That is a falsehood," breathed Leighton, tensely, "I am going to thrash you until you remember."

Leighton saw his boy's frail body shrink, he saw a flush leap to his cheeks and fade, leaving them dead-white again. Then he looked into his son's eyes, and the hand with which he was groping for the cane stopped, poised in air. In those eyes there was something that no man could thrash. Scorn, anguish, pride, the knowledge of ages, gazed out from a child's eyes upon Leighton, and struck terror to his soul. His boy's

frail body was the abiding-place of a power that laughed at the strength of man's hands.

"My boy, O, my boy!" groaned Leighton.

"Father!" cried Shenton, with the cry of a bursting heart, and hurled himself into his father's arms.

CHAPTER V

THE next day was the first of the long vacation, and with it came an addition to the Leighton household. Mammy was given a temporary helper, a shrewd little maid, with a head thirty years old on shoulders of twelve. Lalia was her name. The Reverend Orme had chosen her from among his charity pupils. He himself gave her his instructions—never to leave Shenton except to run and report the moment he escaped from her charge.

Lalia was accepted without suspicion by the children not as a nurse, but as a playmate. Weeks passed. The four played together with a greater harmony than the three had ever attained. Day after day the Reverend Orme sat waiting in his study and brooding. The dreaded call never came. He began to distrust his messenger.

Then one stifling afternoon as he sat dozing in his chair a sharp rap on the study door awakened him with a start.

"Master! Master!" called Lalia's voice.

"Yes, yes," cried Leighton; "come in."

As he rose from his chair Lalia entered. She was breathless with running.

"Master," she said, "Shenton did quarrel with us. He has gone to Manoel—to his house."

"Manoel!" cried Leighton, "Manoel!" and strode hatless out into the glaring sun, across the lawn, and down the loquat avenue.

Lewis, standing with Natalie in the orange-orchard, stared, wondering, at that hurrying figure. Never had he seen the Reverend Orme walk like that, hatless, head hanging and swinging from side to side, fists clenched. Where could he be going? Suddenly he knew. The Reverend Orme was going to Manoel's house. Shenton was there. Lalia came running to them. "Hold Natalie!" Lewis cried to her, and sped away to warn Shenton of danger. He ran with all the speed of his eight years, but from the first he felt he was too late. The low-hanging branches of the orange-trees hindered him.

When he burst through the last of them, he saw the Reverend Orme's tall figure, motionless now, standing at the soiled, small-paned window of Manoel's house. As he stared, the tall figure crouched and stole out of sight, around the corner toward the door. Lewis rushed to the window and looked in. It seemed to him only a day since he had had to drag a log to stand on to see through this same window.

Shenton was sitting on the bench beside the table, his

black, curly head hanging to one side. Beyond him sat Manoel, leering and jabbering. Between them was a bottle. Lewis's lips were opening for a cry of warning when the door was flung wide, and the Reverend Orme stepped into the room. Lewis could not see Shenton's face, but he saw his slight form suddenly straighten.

Then he realized with a great relief that the Reverend Orme was not looking at Shenton; his gaze was fastened on Manoel. Lewis, too, turned his eyes on Manoel. Cold sweat came out over him as he saw the terror in Manoel's face. The leer was still there, frozen. Over it and through it, like a double exposure on a single negative, hung the film of terror. The Reverend Orme, his hands half outstretched, walked slowly toward Manoel.

Suddenly the Portuguese crouched as though to spring. As quick as the gleam of a viper's tongue, Leighton's long arms shot out. Straight for the man's throat went his hands. They closed, the long, white fingers around a swarthy neck, thumbs doubled in, their knuckles sinking into the throat. Lewis felt as though it were his own eyes that started from their sockets. With a scream, he turned and ran.

He cast himself beneath the shelter of the first low-hanging orange-tree. He saw the Reverend Orme stalk by, bearing Shenton in his arms. For the first time in his life Lewis heard the sobs of a grown man, and in-

stinctively knew himself the possessor of a secret thing —a thing that must never be told.

At the house, alarmed by Natalie's incoherent, excited chatter and Lalia's stubborn silence, Mrs. Leighton waited in suspense. Leighton entered with his burden and laid it down. Then he turned. She saw his face.

"Orme!" she cried, *"Orme!"* and started toward him, groping as though she had been blinded.

"Touch me not, Ann," spoke Leighton, with a strange calmness. "Thank God! the mark of Cain is on my brow."

CHAPTER VI

THAT very night Leighton sought out his friend, the chief of police. He told him his story from the first creeping fear for his boy to the moment of terrible vengeance.

"So you killed him, eh?" said the chief, tossing his cigarette from him and thoughtfully lighting another. "Too bad. You ought to have come to me first, my friend, turned him over to us for a beating. It would have come to the same thing in the end and saved you a world of trouble. But what 's done, is done. Now we must think. What do you suggest?"

Amazement dawned in Leighton's haggard face.

"What do *I* suggest?" he answered. "What does the *law* suggest, sir? Are there no courts and prison-bars in this country for—for——"

"There, there," interrupted the chief. "As you say, there are courts, of course, gaols, too; but our accommodations for criminals are not suitable for gentlemen."

"It is not for me to choose my accommodation, sir. I am here to pay the penalty of my crime. I have come to be arrested."

"Arrested?" repeated the chief, staring at Leighton.

"Are you not my friend? Are you not the friend of all of us that count?"

"But—but——" stammered Leighton.

"Yes, sir," repeated the chief, "my friend."

"What do you mean?" cried Leighton. "Do you mean you will leave my punishment to my conscience—to my God?"

The chief looked at him quizzically.

"Your punishment? Why, certainly. To your God, if you like. But let us get down to business. You are nervous. Quite natural. When I was an irresponsible student, I killed a servant for waking me on the morning after a spree. I remember I was nervous for weeks. Now sit still. Calm yourself. Let me think for you. In fact, while we 've been chatting, I *have* thought for you."

The chief leaned back in his chair and placed his finger-tips together.

"Listen. When it becomes necessary, I shall block all roads—all exits from the city—by telegraph. There is one highway—the road into the interior—without telegraph as yet. We should never think of blocking that.

"Now, as to time available. Let us be on the safe side. You must get away to-morrow. You have horses, a wagon, stable-hands. Have you a tent? No. I will lend you one—a large bell tent.

"Now, as to affairs—your property in this town. You will sign papers making your friend Lawyer Lima Rodolpho and me joint trustees. He is my bitterest enemy, and I am his. In this way you can rest assured that neither of us will rob you."

Leighton made a deprecating gesture. The chief raised his hand and smiled.

"Ah," he said, "do not rob me of that thought. It was a stroke of genius. Between us," he continued, "we will advance you all the money you will need for a year. By that time we can send you more." He rose, and held out his hand. "Now, my friend, go, and God go with you!"

Leighton took the chief's hand.

"Good-by. I—I thank you."

"Not at all," said the chief, with a hearty grip. "To-morrow, eh? Get away to-morrow."

Leighton walked out and home in a daze. The remembrance of the agony in which he had resigned himself to the abandonment of his family, to notoriety, disgrace, and retribution, clung to him. What had seemed a nightmare, with an awakening bound to come, now became a waking dream, more terrible, because no dawn could give it end.

But the chief had been wise. He had left Leighton no time for disastrous introspection. Action, work, that sovereign antidote for troubled minds, seized upon him.

He told Mrs. Leighton in as few words as possible what had happened.

She, too, was dazed by the chief's philosophy of friendship.

"But, Orme——" she began.

"I know, I know, Ann," he interrupted. "Only, we have n't time to think now, nor time to talk. Call mammy. Remember, we have but the one wagon. Pack carefully."

He himself hurried off to arouse the stable-hand. The stable-hand had not been to Manoel's house. He knew nothing of what had happened. He worked most of the night cheerfully, preparing for the welcome camping-trip.

By noon on the following day, when streets and country roads lay deserted under the tropic sun, the cavalcade was off. The wagon, drawn by two mules in charge of the stable-hand, led the way. It was laden with tent, baggage, and the women-folk, Ann, Natalie, and mammy. Behind followed Leighton on his favorite horse and Shenton and Lewis on their ponies. By sundown they reached the banks of the Tieté. It took men and boys an hour to set the big bell tent.

CHAPTER VII

BECAUSE the road led north, they traveled north. Week after week, month after month, sometimes by hard, long stretches where water was scarce, sometimes lingering where pasturage was good, sometimes halting to let a fever run its course, they pushed northward. The farther they went, the more barren became the wilderness. The feudal mansions of the wealthy coffee-planters gave way to the miserable abodes of a land of drought. But houses were never far between, and wherever there were houses, there was cane rum. It was so cheap it was often given away for a smile.

Twice in the long months Shenton had eluded his watchful father, once by slipping his saddle-cloth and going back to pick it up, and once by riding ahead on a misty morning. Each time he stole back with hanging and drooping shoulders. The look of utter despondency and gloomy despair in his eyes wrung his parents' hearts, held back his father's hand from wrath.

Of them all, Shenton suffered most from fever. There came a time when he could no longer ride. Natalie, grown pale and thin, but strong withal, took his place

on the pony and he hers on the wagon. There he lay long hours in his mother's arms.

When all the storms of life had swept over her, Ann Leighton looked back upon those days as the abiding-place of her dearest memories. Safe within the circle of her arms lay her boy. There no evil could reach him, no gnawing temptation ravage his child's will. Her watchful love warded off the gloomy hour. His prattle of childish things warmed her heart until it swelled to an exquisite agony of content.

One day they awoke to a new presence on the flat horizon. Far, far away rose a mountain from the plain. It was wonderfully symmetrical, rising to a single peak. All day long they traveled toward it. All day long Shenton kept his somber eyes fixed upon it. Toward evening he raised his face to his mother's. She leaned over him.

"Mother," he whispered, "I should like to reach the mountain."

Tears welled from her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. She held Shenton's curly head against her face so that he could not see. She stifled a sob and whispered back:

"My boy, you will reach the mountain."

The next day a man of the country joined them. He was dressed in a suit and hat of deerskin. On his feet were sandals. Across one shoulder he carried a stick

from which dangled a bundle. His quick, springy stride carried him easily beside the cavalcade.

"The blessing of God be upon your Mercies," was his greeting. "Whence do you come and whither do you go? Tell him who so rudely asks, I beg you. I am John, the Courier."

Ann and the Reverend Orme looked vaguely at each other. They had no answer. But Shenton spoke.

"Friend," he said, "we come from the South. We journey to yonder mountain. What is it called?"

"It is called the Sorcerer."

"The Sorcerer?" cried Shenton. "That is a strange name."

"It is called the Sorcerer," said the man, "because it deceives. It is a landmark in the wilderness, but it shows no man the way. So equal are its sides, that it points neither east nor west nor south nor north. Upon its summit is a single tree, planted by no human hands."

"I see the tree," said Shenton. "Mother, do you see the tree? It is like the steeple on a church." Then he turned to the courier. "Friend, the mountain points upward."

They camped at the foot of the mountain, for fever had laid its final grip upon Shenton. He was too weak to stand the jolting of the wagon. One night, while lying in his mother's arms, he slipped away from life.

Leighton looked upon his boy's face, still alight with

content at having reached the mountain, upon his white, blue-veined body, so pitifully frail, and marveled that a frame so weak, so tender, so peaceful, had been only now a mighty battle-field.

He gathered up the body in his arms, and calling roughly to Lewis to bring an ax, he started up the barren mountainside.

Ann, dumb and tearless, stood before the tent, and watched him with unseeing eyes. Natalie, crying, clutched her skirt. At her feet sat mammy, her face upturned, tears flowing, her body swaying to her sobs.

Up and up climbed Leighton with Lewis panting behind him. They reached the towering summit of the mountain.

A great rock stood at the foot of the lonely tree. Beneath it Leighton dug with ax and hands. He tore branches from the tree and spread them within. Upon the fresh, green couch he laid the body of his boy. He fell upon his knees before it and tried to pray, but could not.

"O, Death," he groaned, "to this young soul hast thou been kind." Then with many stones they closed the tomb.

Leighton looked wistfully about him. He was seized by the primitive desire of man to leave some visible sign of overwhelming grief. His eyes rose above the rock to the lonely tree. Grasping the ax, he climbed the

tree. High above the mountain-top he cut its stem. Then limb after limb fell crashing to the earth until only two were left. Out one and then the other he clambered and cut them off. The lonely tree was no more; in its place stood a mighty cross.

From far away across the plain, John, the Courier, looked back. His keen eyes fell upon the mountain. He stopped and stared.

"Ah, Sorcerer," he murmured, "hast thou now a heart? What power has crowned thy brow with the holy cross? Behold! one arm points to the rising sun and one to its setting. I shall no longer call thee Sorcerer, for thou art become the Guide."

At the edge of the plain stretched a line of hills. Within them was a little valley that looked toward the distant mountain. Leighton purchased the valley from its owner, Dom Francisco, who prized it lightly beside his vast herds of cattle.

At the top of the valley, and facing the mountain, Leighton built his new abode, four walls and a roof of homemade tiles. When it was finished, he looked upon its ugliness and said, "The Lord hath crushed my heart to infinite depths. Let us call this place Nadir."

CHAPTER VIII

THE Leightons, who settled at Nadir after a long year of pilgrimage, looked back upon the happy years at Consolation Cottage as the dead might look back upon existence. They were changed indeed. Ann's skin had lost the pale pink of transplanted Northern blood. Her sweet face had almost lost the dignity of sorrow. It was lined, weather-beaten, at times almost vacant. The Reverend Orme's black mane had suddenly turned white in streaks. A perpetual scowl knitted his brows. To mammy's broad countenance, built for vast smiles, had come a look of plaintive despair.

Natalie and Lewis were at the weedy age of nine. It was natural that they should have changed, but their change had gone beyond nature. Upon them, as upon their elders, had settled the silences and the vaguely wondering expression of those who live in lands of drought and hardship, who look upon fate daily.

Both of the children had become thin and hard; but to Lewis had come a greater change. His brown hair and eyes had darkened almost to black, his skin taken on an olive tinge. His face, with its eager eyes sometimes shining like the high lights in a deep pool or sud-

denly grown slumberous with dreams, began to proclaim him a Leighton of the Leightons. So evident became the badge of lineage that Ann and the Reverend Orme both noticed it. To Ann it meant nothing, but in the Reverend Orme it aroused bitter memories of his own boy. He began to avert his eyes from Lewis.

It was about this time that Natalie and Lewis cut their names to Lew and Nat. The two were inseparable. Each had a pony, and they roved at will until the sad day when a school was first opened in that wilderness.

It happened that Dom Francisco, the cattle king from whom Leighton had purchased Nadir, was a widower twice over and the father of twenty children, many of them still of tender years. When he learned that Leighton had been a schoolmaster, he did not rest until he had persuaded him to undertake the instruction of such of his children as were not already of use on the ranch. The Reverend Orme consented from necessity. His cash from the sale of Leighton Academy was gone; the rents from Consolation Cottage were small and reached him at long intervals.

Once more routine fell upon the Leighton household; once more the years stole by.

Lewis's school days were short. The Reverend Orme found that he could not stand the constant sight of the boy's face. To save himself from the shame of an out-

burst, he had bought a flock of goats and put Lewis in charge. Sometimes on his pony, sometimes on foot, Lewis wandered with his flock over the low hills. When the rains had been kind and the wilderness was a riot of leaf and bloom above long reaches of verdant young grass, his journeys were short. But when the grass was dry, the endless thorn-trees leafless, and the whole earth, stripped of Nature's awnings, weltered under a brazen sky, the hardy goats carried him far in their search for sustenance.

When he was near, Natalie joined him as soon as school and household duties would let her. Those were happy, quiet hours. Sometimes she brought cookies, hot from mammy's oven, sometimes the richer roly-poly, redolent of cinnamon and spice, a confection prized to this day, openly by the young, secretly by the old. Nor did Lewis receive her with empty hands. One day a monster guava, kept cool under moist leaves, greeted her eyes; the next, a brimming hatful of the tart imbu. If fruit failed, there was some wondrous toy of fingered clay or carved wood, or, perhaps, merely a glimpse of some furry little animal drawn to Lewis's knee by the power of vast stillness.

Lewis could not have told what it was he felt for Natalie. She was not beautiful, as children of the world go. Her little nose was saddled with freckles. Her eyes were brown, with a tinge of gold, but they

were too big for her pale face. She was thin and lanky. Her hair, which matched the color of her eyes, might have been beautiful, but hair done in hard, tight braids has no chance to show itself. Lewis only knew that even when most grave Natalie's note was a note of joy —the only note of joy in all Nadir. To hear her cry, panting from her haste, "What is it to-day, Lew? A guava? O, Lew, what a *beauty!*" was ample reward for the longest search.

But there were days when Lewis and his goats were too far afield for Natalie to come. On those days Lewis carried with him sometimes a book, but more often a lump of clay, wrapped in a wet cloth. He would capture some frolicking kid and handle him for an hour, gently, but deeply, seeking out bone and muscle with his thin, nervous fingers. Then he would mold a tiny and clumsy image of the kid in clay. No sooner was it done than idleness would pall upon him. Back would go the clay into the wet cloth, to be kneaded into a shapeless mass from which a new creation might spring forth, a full-grown goat, his pony, any live thing upon which he could first lay his hands.

Even so, those days were long. The books he had read many, many times. Sometimes the clay would turn brittle under the morning sun, sometimes his fingers forgot what cunning they had, sometimes black thought fell upon him and held him till he felt a vague

despair. He stood within the threshold of manhood. Who was he? What was life? Was this life?

About him men married and begat children, goats begat goats, cattle begat cattle, one day begat another. Lewis sat with hands locked about his knees and stared across the low hills out into the wide plain. "The Bible is wrong," he breathed to himself. "The world will never, never end."

Little do we know when our present world will end. A day came when Dom Francisco, the cattle king, whose herds by popular account were as the sands of the desert, asked in marriage the hand of Natalie.

As, toward evening, Lewis headed his flock for home, he saw in the distance a pillar of dust. It came rapidly to him. From it emerged Natalie on her pony. She jumped down, slipped the reins over her arm, and joined him.

"You have come far and fast," he said, glancing at the sweating pony. "Is anything the matter?"

"No," said Natalie, hesitatingly, and then repeated —"no. I 've just come to talk to you."

For some time they walked in silence behind the great herd of nervous goats, which occasionally stopped to pasture, but more often scampered ahead till a call from Lewis checked them. Natalie laid her hand on the sleeve of Lewis's leather coat, a gesture with which she was wont to claim his close attention.

"Lew," she said, "what is marriage?"

Lewis turned and looked down at her. They were both seventeen, but his inch start of her had grown to half a foot.

"Marriage? Why, marriage——" He stopped. A faint color flared in his cheeks. He looked away from her. Then he said calmly: "Marriage, Nat, is just mating—like birds mate. First you see them flying about anyhow; then two fly together. They build a nest; they mate; they have little birds. The little birds grow up and do the whole thing over again. That 's—that 's marriage."

"So?" said Natalie. A little frown came to her brows. Was that marriage, indeed? Then she shook the frown from her. "Lew," she said gravely, but placidly, "they tell me I 'm to marry Dom Francisco. Is n't it—is n't it *funny*?"

Lewis stopped in his tracks and shook her hand from his arm. His eyes flared.

"What did you say? They tell you—*who* told you?"

"Why, Lew!" cried Natalie, tears in her eyes and her lips twitching.

"There, there, Nat," said Lewis, softly. He laid his arm across her shoulders in an awkward gesture of affection. "Tell me, Nat. Who was it told you—told you that?"

"Father," sobbed Natalie.

Before she knew what he was doing, Lew had leaped upon her pony and was off at a gallop.

"Lew!" cried Natalie, "Lew! Shall I bring in the goats?"

He did not heed her.

CHAPTER IX

LEWIS stopped at Nadir only long enough to learn that the Reverend Orme had remained at the school-house as had been his wont of late. He found him there, idle, sitting at the rough table that served as his desk, and brooding. Lewis walked half the length of the room before Leighton saw him.

"What are you doing here?"

"What have you been telling Nat?"

The questions were almost simultaneous.

"What have I been telling Natalie?" repeated the Reverend Orme. "Well, what *have* I been telling her?"

Lewis fixed his eyes on Leighton's face.

"Are you really going to marry Nat to that—to that old man?"

The Reverend Orme shifted in his chair.

"Lewis," he said, "I do n't know that it 's any of your business, but it is probable that Natalie will marry Dom Francisco."

Lewis moved awkwardly from one foot to the other, but his eyes never shifted.

"Does Mother—Mrs. Leighton know about this? Does mammy? Do they *agree?*"

"Young man," answered Leighton, angrily, "they know that, as this world goes, Natalie is a lucky girl. Dom Francisco is the wealthiest man in the province. Look around you, sir. Whom would you have her marry if not Dom Francisco? Some pauper, I suppose. Some foundling."

Lewis's cheeks burned red.

"You need not go so far as to marry her to a foundling," he answered, "but you might be kinder to her than to marry her to—to that old man. You might choke her to death."

The Reverend Orme leaped from his chair.

"Choke *her* to death, you—you interloper!" He strode toward Lewis, his trembling hands held before him.

"Hold on!" cried Lewis, his eyes flaming. "I 'm no drunkard—no cowardly Manoel."

The Reverend Orme stopped in his stride. A ghastly pallor came over his face.

"Manoel!" he whispered. "What do *you* know about Manoel?"

Lewis's heart sank low within him. His unbroken silence of years had been instinctive. Now, when it was too late, he suddenly realized that it had been the thread that held him to Nadir. He had broken it. Never more could he and the Reverend Orme sleep be-

neath the same roof, eat at the same table. He saw it in the Reverend Orme's face.

Leighton had staggered back to his chair and sat staring vacantly at the floor. Lewis looked at his head, streaked with white, at his brow, terribly lined, and at his vacant, staring eyes. He felt a sudden great pity for his foster-father, but pity had come too late.

"Sir," he said, "I am going away. I shall need some money." He felt no shame at asking for money. For seven years he had tended Leighton's goats—tended them so well that in seven years they had increased sevenfold.

Leighton unlocked the drawer of his table and took out a small roll of bank-notes. He tossed it on the table. Lewis picked out two notes from the roll, and pushed the rest back. He started toward the door. Half-way he paused and turned to his foster-father.

"Good-by, sir. I 'm sorry I let you know that—that I knew."

Leighton did not look up.

"Good-by, Lewis," he said quietly.

Lewis hurried to his little room. He took out all his boyish treasures and laid them on the bed. How silly they looked, how childish! He swept them away, and spread a large red handkerchief in their place. He heard Natalie come in and call for him, but he did not answer. In the handkerchief he packed his scanty

wardrobe. As he knotted the corners together he heard Mrs. Leighton and mammy chatting lightly with Natalie, helping her to dress.

Lewis, heavy-hearted, looked about his ugly little room, so bare, but as friendly as a plain face endeared by years of kindness. From among his discarded treasures he chose the model in clay of a kid, jumping, the best he had ever made. He tucked it into his bundle; then he picked up the bundle, and walked out into the great room, kitchen, sitting- and dining-room combined.

Mrs. Leighton and mammy were seated at the table. Beside them stood Natalie. They turned and looked at Lewis, surprised. Lewis stared at Natalie. She wore a dress he had seen but twice before and then on great occasions. It had been a birthday present from her parents. It was a red, pleated dress Accordion silk, the women called it.

About Natalie's shoulders was a white, filmy scarf. For the first time in her life her hair was loosely piled upon her head. Through it and over it ran a bright ribbon. The gloss of the satin ribbon was as naught beside the gloss of her shining hair. Her neck, and her arms from the elbows, were bare. Her neck was very thin. One could almost see the bones.

"Where are you going, Lewis?" said Mrs. Leighton, listlessly.

Lewis felt the tears rise to his eyes. He was ashamed of them.

"Do not speak to me," he said roughly. "You are a wicked woman. You have sold Natalie." Then he turned fiercely on mammy. "And you," he said—"you have dressed her for the market. You are a bad nigger."

Mrs. Leighton gasped and then began to cry softly. Mammy's eyes stared at Lewis.

"Bad niggah, young Marster?" she mumbled vaguely.

Natalie grasped the table and leaned forward. "Lew!" she cried. "Why, *Lew!*"

Lewis struck a tear from his cheek, turned, and fled. He went to the rough lean-to that served as a stable and began to saddle his pony.

In all the heavens there was not a cloud. It was what the natives, too often scourged by drought, called an ugly night. The full moon rose visibly into the pale bowl of blue. Above her tropic glare the satellite stars shone wanly and far away.

As Lewis was about to mount, Natalie came running from the house. She held her new dress above her knees. Her white scarf streamed out like two wings behind her.

"Lew!" she called. "Wait! What are you doing?"

Lewis waited for her. She came close to him and laid her hand upon his arm. Her brown eyes, shot with

gold, were bigger than ever. They looked their question into his face.

"Nat," he said, "I 've quarreled with your dad. There 's nothing to talk about. I must go."

"Go, Lew? Go where?"

Lewis shrugged his shoulders.

"I do n't know," he said. "Just go."

Natalie laid her head against him. Her two hands gripped his shoulders. She sobbed as though her heart would break. Lewis put his arm about her. He felt the twitching bones of her thin, warm body. His face was in her hair.

"Ah, Natalie," he murmured, brokenly, "do n't cry! do n't cry!"

They were children. They did not think to kiss.

CHAPTER X

LEWIS traveled toward the ancient town of Oeiras. He had cast about in his mind for some means of livelihood and had decided to become a goatskin-buyer. He was hoping to come to an arrangement with some merchant in Oeiras.

One morning as he jogged along, his eyes on the ground, his thoughts far away, he heard the patter of many hoofs on the hard clay trail. A pack-train was coming toward him. At its head rode a guide. The guide stopped upon meeting Lewis, and immediately every mule behind him stopped, too.

"The blessing of God be upon you, friend!" he drawled. "Whence do you come and whither do you go?"

"God's blessing be praised," answered Lewis. "I come from the hills. I go to Oeiras."

"To Oeiras? We come thence. It is a long road, Oeiras."

"I go to seek a merchant who will start me as a goatskin-buyer. Do you know of any such?"

"A goatskin-buyer? Friend, for almost every goat there is a goatskin-buyer. My brother is one, my father-

in-law another. I myself shall become one after this trip is over. You would do well to choose some other occupation."

Lewis did not smile at the man's guile, though it had not escaped him. He was gazing open-mouthed at a horseman who was forcing his way past the laden mules. From some distance the horseman yelled in English:

"What the devil 's the matter now? Ye gods and little fishes! what are you stopping for now?"

The guide shrugged his shoulders and tapped his head.

"Mad," he said; "an idiot. Imagine! He thinks those are words!"

The horseman drew up beside them, wrath in his face.

"Sir," said Lewis, "your guide stopped to greet me. It is the custom of the country."

Lewis and Natalie spoke English with the precision of the adults from whom they had learned it. They had never heard the argot of American childhood, but from mammy and from the tongue of their adopted land they had acquired a soft slurring of speech which gave a certain quaintness to their diction.

It was the turn of the stranger to stare open-mouthed. Lewis wore the uniform of the local cow-boy: a thick, wide-brimmed leather hat, fastened under the chin with a thong; a loose deerskin jumper and deerskin breeches

that fitted tightly to the leg and ended in a long flap over the instep. On his feet were sandals and grotesque, handwrought spurs. His red bundle was tied to the cantle of his saddle. At hearing precise English from such a source, the stranger felt an astonishment almost equal to Balaam's surprise on hearing his ass speak.

No less was Lewis's wonder at the stranger's raiment. A pith helmet, Norfolk jacket, moleskin riding-breeches, leather puttees, and stout, pigskin footwear—these were strange apparel.

The stranger was not old. One would have placed him at forty-five. As a matter of fact, he was only forty. He was the first to recover poise. He peered keenly into Lewis's face.

"May I ask your name?"

"My name is Lewis Leighton. And yours?"

The stranger waved his hand impatiently.

"Where are you going?"

"I am on my way to Oeiras to seek employment," said Lewis.

"To seek employment, eh?" said the stranger, thoughtfully. "Will you tell this misbegotten guide that I wish to return to the water we passed a little while ago? I should like to talk to you, if you do n't mind."

Lewis translated the order.

"So they are words, after all," said the guide. He shook his head from side to side, as one who suspects witchcraft.

When the pack-train was headed back on the road it had come, Lewis turned to the guide.

"Whither was your master bound?" he asked.

"Him?" said the guide, with a shrug of his shoulder. "Who knows? No sooner does he reach one town than he 's off for another. It is his life, the madman, to bore a hole through this world of Christ. Just now we were headed for the ranch of Dom Francisco. After that, who knows? But he pays, friend. Gold oozes from him like matter from a sore."

They came to a spring. The stranger ordered up the fly of a tent. From his baggage he took two wonderful folding-chairs and a folding-table, opened them, and placed them under the fly. "Sit down," he said to Lewis.

The stranger took off his helmet and tossed it on the ground. Lewis pulled off his hat hurriedly and laid it aside. The stranger looked at him long and earnestly.

"Are you hungry?"

Lewis shrugged his shoulders.

"One can always eat," he said.

"Good," said the stranger. "Please tell these loafers to off-load the mules and set camp. And call that one here—the black fellow with a necklace of chickens."

Lewis did as he was bidden. The man with the chickens stood before the stranger and grinned.

The stranger raised his eyes on high.

"Ah, God," he said, "I give Thee thanks that at last I can talk to this low-browed, brutal son of a degenerate race of cooks." He turned to Lewis. "Tell him," he continued—"tell him that I never want to see anything boiled again unless it 's his live carcass boiling in oil. Tell him that I hate the smell, the sight, and the sound of garlic. Tell him that jerked beef is a fitting sustenance for maggots, but not for hungering man. Tell him there is a place in the culinary art for red peppers, but not by the handful. Tell him, may he burn hereafter as I have burned within and lap up with joy the tears that I have shed in pain. Tell him—tell him that."

For the first time in the presence of the stranger Lewis smiled. His smile was rare and, as is often the case with a rare smile, it held accumulated charm.

"Sir," he said, "let me cook a meal for you."

While Lewis cooked, the stranger laid the table for two. In less than an hour the meal was ready. A young fowl, spitchcocked, nestled in a snowy bed of rice, each grain of which was a world unto itself. The fowl was basted with the sovereign gravy of the South; thick, but beaten smooth, dusted with pepper and salt, breathing an essence of pork. Beside the laden platter was a

plate of crisp bread—bread that had been soaked into freshness in a wet cloth and then toasted lightly. Beside the bread lay a pat of fresh butter on a saucer. It was butter from the tin, but washed white in the cool water of the spring, and then sprinkled with salt.

The stranger nodded approval as he started to eat.

"A simple meal, my accomplished friend," he said to Lewis, "but I know the mouths of the gods are watering."

When nothing was left of the food, the stranger, through Lewis, ordered the table cleared, then he turned to his guest.

"You have already had occasion to see how useful you would be to me," he said. "I propose that you seek employment no further. Join me not as cook, but as interpreter, companion, friend in very present trouble. I will pay you a living wage."

Lewis's eyes lighted up. What wage should he demand for accompanying this strange man, who drew him as Lewis himself drew shy, wild creatures to his knee? No wage. No wage but service. "I will go with you," he said.

"Good!" said the stranger. "Now—where shall we go?"

"Where shall we go?" repeated Lewis, puzzled.

"Yes. Where shall we go?"

"That is for you to say," said Lewis, gravely, fearing a joke.

"Not at all," said the stranger. "To me it is a matter of complete indifference. Of all the spots on the face of the earth, this is the last; no game, no water, no scenery, no women, no food. And having seen the last spot on earth, direction no longer interests me. What would *you* like to see?"

Lewis felt himself inside a book of fairy-tales.

"I?" he said, smiling shyly. "I should like to see the sea again."

"Right you are!" said the stranger. "Tell the guide to start for the sea."

CHAPTER XI

THE stranger was accompanied by two muleteers, a cook, a wash-boy, and the guide. Not one of these was a menial, for menials do not breed in open country. When the stranger shouted for one of them, they all gathered round him and stood at ease, smiling at his gestures, guessing genially at what he was trying to say, and in the end calmly doing things their own way.

When Lewis called the guide, they all came, as was their custom.

"Your master," said Lewis to the guide, "wishes to go to the sea. He bids you start for the sea."

The guide stared at Lewis, then at the stranger.

"The sea! What is the sea?"

"The sea," said Lewis, gravely, "is the ocean, the great water where ships sail."

"Bah!" said the guide. "More madness. How shall I guide him to the sea if I know not where it is? Tell him there is no sea."

One of the muleteers broke in.

"Indeed, there is a sea, but it is far, far away. It is thirty days away."

"And how do you go?" asked Lewis.

"I do not know. I only know that one must go to Joazeiro, and from there they say there is a road of iron that leads one to the sea."

"Joazeiro!" exclaimed the guide. "Ah, that is some sense. Joazeiro is a place. It is on the river. Petrolina is on this side, Joazeiro on that. As for this road of iron, bah!" He turned on the muleteer. "Thou, too, art mad."

The stranger listened to what Lewis had to say, then he drew out a map from his pocket, unfolded it, and spread it on the table. "A road of iron, eh? Well, let 's see."

The guide grinned at Lewis.

"It is a picture of the world," he said. "He stares at it daily."

"Yes," said the stranger, "here we are—Joazeiro."

Lewis leaned over his shoulder. He saw the word "Joazeiro." From it a straight red line ran eastward to the edge of the map.

The stranger measured distances with a pencil. "We can make Joazeiro in fifteen days," he said. "Tell the men we will rest to-day and to-night. To-morrow we start."

The marvels of that camp were a revelation to Lewis. He kept his mouth shut, but his eyes were open. One

battered thing after another revealed its mystery to him. He turned to the stranger.

"You are a great traveler," he said.

The stranger started. He had been day-dreaming.

"A great traveler? Yes. I have been a wanderer on all the faces of the earth. I have lived seven lives. I 'll give them to you, if you like."

Lewis smiled, puzzled, but somehow pleased.

"Give them to me—your seven lives?"

The stranger did not answer. Gloom had settled on the face that Lewis had seen only alight. Lewis, too, was silent. His life with Ann and the Reverend Orme had taught him much. He recognized the dwelling-place of sorrow.

Presently the stranger shook his mood from him.

"Come," he said, "let us begin." From one of his bags he took a pack of cards. He sat at the table and shuffled them. "There are many games of patience," he continued. "They are all founded on averages and thousands of combinations, so intricate that the law of recurrence can be determined only by months of figuring. However, one can learn a patience without bothering with the law of recurrence. I shall now teach you a game called Canfield."

Time after time the cards were laid out, played, and reshuffled.

"Now," said the stranger, "do you think you know the game?"

"Yes," said Lewis, "I think so."

He played, with some success.

"You have got out fourteen cards," said the stranger. "You have beaten the game."

"How can that be?" asked Lewis.

"It can be," said the stranger, "because this is one of the few games of patience that has been reduced to a scientific gambling basis. The odds, allowing for the usual advantage to the banker, have been determined at five to one. Say I 'm the banker. I sell you the pack for fifty-two pennies, and I pay you five pennies for every card you get out. Five to one. Do you see that?"

Lewis nodded.

"Well," said the stranger. "You got out fourteen cards. If you had paid a penny a card for the pack, how much would you have gained over what you spent?"

"Eighteen pennies," said Lewis, after a moment. "If I had got them all out," he added, "it would have been two hundred and eight pennies."

"Right!" said the stranger. "You have a head for figures. Now, have you any money?"

Lewis colored slightly.

"Yes," he said. He fished out his two bank-notes and laid them on the table.

The stranger picked them up.

"All right," he said. "I 'll sell you the pack for one of these. Now, go ahead."

All afternoon Lewis played against the bank with varying fortune. When he was ahead, some instinct made him ashamed to call off; when he was behind, a fever seized him—a fever to hold his own, to win. His eyes began to ache. Toward evening three successive bad hands suddenly wiped out his store of money. A feeling of despair came over him.

"Do n't worry," said the stranger. He pushed the two notes and another toward Lewis. "I 'll give you those for your pony. Now, at it you go. Win him back."

Lewis played feverishly. In an hour he had lost the three notes.

"Never mind," said the stranger; "I 'll give you another chance." He pushed one of the notes toward Lewis. "That for your bundle in the red handkerchief. You may win the whole lot back in one hand."

Lewis played and lost. Despair seized upon him now with no uncertain hand. His money, his pony, even his little bundle gone! This was calamity. He suffered as only the young can suffer. His world had suddenly become a blank. Through bloodshot eyes he looked upon the stranger and tried to hate him, but could not.

"Come," said the stranger, rising and lighting a lan-

tern. "I 'm going to make you a foolish offer of big odds against me. I 'll wager all I 've won from you against one year's service that you can 't beat the game in one hand. Eleven cards out of the fifty-two beats the game."

What was a year's service? thought Lewis. He had been willing to give that for nothing. He played and lost. Suddenly shame was added to his despair. To give service is noble, but to have it bought from you, won from you! Lewis fought back his tears desperately. What a fool, what a fool this man, this stranger, had made of him!

The stranger took out his watch and looked at it.

"In seven hours and seven minutes," he remarked, "I have given you one of my seven lives that it took almost seven years to live. Seven, by the way, is one of the mystic numbers."

At his first words Lewis felt a wave of relief—the relief of the diver in deep waters who feels himself rising to the surface. Perhaps all was not lost. Perhaps this man could restore their imperiled friendship, so sudden, already so dear.

The stranger went on:

"Ashamed to stop when you 're ahead, too keen to stop when you 're behind, you 've lost all you possessed, jarred your trust in your fellow-man, and bartered freedom for slavery—mortgaged a year of your life. You 've

climbed the cliff of greed, got one whiff of sordid elation at the top, and tumbled down the precipice of despair. In short, you 've lived the whole life of a gambler—all in seven hours."

He picked up Lewis's two notes and stuffed them into his own well-filled wallet. "They say," he continued, "that only experience teaches. You may gamble all the rest of your life, but take it from me, my friend, gambling holds no emotion you have n't gone through today."

Their eyes met. Lewis's gaze was puzzled, but intent. The stranger's eyes were almost twinkling.

"By the way," he said, "what 's in the bundle? Let 's see."

Lewis brought his sorry little bundle and laid it on the table. He untied the knots with trembling fingers. The stranger poked around the contents with his finger. He picked out the little kid of clay, already minus a leg.

"Hallo! What 's this?"

"A toy," said Lewis, coloring.

"Who made it?"

"I did."

"You did, eh? Well, I 'll keep it." The stranger fingered around until he found the missing leg. "You can take the rest of your things away. I 'll lend 'em to you, and your pony. Now let 's eat."

That night Lewis, too excited to sleep, lay awake for hours smiling at the moon. He was smiling because he felt that somehow, out of the wreck, friendship had been saved.

CHAPTER XII

THE country through which they traveled was familiar to Lewis, tedious to the stranger. Sand, sparse grass, and thorn-trees; thorn-trees and sand, was their daily portion. The sun beat down and up. They traveled long hours by night, less and less by day. They talked little, for night has a way of sealing the lips of those who journey under her wing.

Water was scarce. The day before that on which they hoped to make the river, a forced march brought them to a certain water-hole. The stranger, Lewis, and the guide arrived at it far ahead of the pack-train. The water-hole was dry. They were thirsty. They pushed on to a little mud house a short way off the trail. The stranger looked up as they approached it.

"Do you think it will stand till we get there?" he asked.

Lewis smiled. The house was leaning in three directions. The weight of its tiled roof threatened at any moment to crush the long-suffering walls to the ground. At one corner stood a great earthen jar, and beside the jar an old hag. She held a gourd to her lips. On some straw in the shade of the eaves was a setting hen.

"Auntie," called Lewis, "we thirst. Give us water."

The old woman turned and stared at them. Her face, all but her eyes, was as dilapidated as her house. Her black eyes, brilliant and piercing, shone out of the ruin.

"I have no water for thee to drink, my pretty son," she answered.

"Shameless one!" cried Lewis. "Dost thou drink thyself and deny the traveler?"

"Eh, eh!" cackled the old woman. "Thou wouldst share my gourd? Then drink, for thy tongue is not so pretty as thy face." She held up the gourd to Lewis in both her hands. He took it from her and passed it to the stranger.

The stranger made a grimace, but sipped the water. Then he flung gourd and water to the ground with half an oath.

"Bah!" he said to Lewis. "It is salt."

"Salt!" cried Lewis. "But she drank of it. I saw her drink."

"Yes," said the stranger; "she 's got an alkalified stomach. Let those who hanker after immortality look upon this woman. She will never die."

The old hag laughed.

"Ah, shameless one, eh?" she mumbled. "'Tis the young one should have tasted, but no matter, for the son is the spit of the father."

"Auntie," said Lewis, smiling, "give us of thy shade."

"Willingly, my pretty son, for thou hast smiled."

They dismounted. The stranger and Lewis entered the house.

"Here," cried the old woman, "sit here; for when the house falls, the weight will go yonder."

Lewis explained to the stranger. He glanced at the old woman.

"Old Immortality has brains," he said. "Might have known it, with those eyes."

They sat on the floor of beaten earth. The old woman went out. Through the gaps in the walls Lewis saw her build a fire and put a pot of the brackish water on to boil. Then he saw her drag the setting hen from her nest and wring its neck. He jumped up and rushed out.

"What are you doing?" he cried. "Why kill a setting hen?"

"Aye," said the old woman, "it is a pity, for she is the last chicken in the world."

Lewis and the stranger were hungry. Night was falling. There was no sign of their belated pack-train. When boiling had done its utmost, they ate the last chicken on earth. Before they had finished, a child, pitifully thin, came in, bearing on her head a small jar of water.

"Now drink," said the old woman, "for this water came from the river, twelve miles away."

They drank, then the stranger set his helmet on the floor for a pillow, laid his head upon it, and slept. Lewis sat beside him. The child had curled up in a corner. The guide was snoring outside. In the doorway the old woman crouched and crooned.

Presently she turned and peered into the house. She beckoned to Lewis. He rose and followed her. She led him around the house, through a thicket of thorn-trees, and up the slope of a small sand-dune. Toward the west sand-dunes rose and fell in monotonous succession.

At the top of the dune the old woman crouched on her heels and motioned to Lewis to sit.

"My son," she said, "thou hast taken my carcass for the common clay of these parts. I cannot blame thee, but had I the water to wash this cursed dust from my face and hands, I would show thee a skin that was stained at birth with the olive and veins whose blood flows unmixed through generations without end. These wrinkled feet have flattened the face of the earth bit by bit. Bear witness those who left me here behind to die! My eyes have looked upon things seen and unseen. I am old. To youth is given folly; to the old, wisdom. To-night my wisdom shall suckle thy folly, for the heavens have shown me a sign."

Lewis stared at the old woman with wondering eyes.

He had never seen a Gipsy. What was she? he asked himself. No native. The native's mind was keen with knowledge of horses, cattle, and goats, but stolid, almost stupid, when it came to words and thoughts. There was an exception—the mad. The mad prattled and sometimes said extraordinary things. Perhaps this woman was mad. He turned half toward her.

"Look up," she commanded. "Dost thou see no sign?"

Lewis lay on his back and gazed into the sky. "I see the moon and the stars, Auntie—a young moon and very old stars—but no sign. Not even a cloud to remind the world of rain."

The old woman leaned forward and touched his arm. He started.

"Look over there!" She pointed to the west and south. "See how the young moon is held within the claws of Scorpion. His back is arched across the quarter. His tail points to the south. The Cross that some call Holy hangs like a pendent upon its tip. Look up. Upon his arched back he bears the circlet—the seven worlds of women."

"I see the Scorpion, Auntie," said Lewis, humoring her. "I see the circlet too, but it is far above his back. It is like a crown. Read me the sign of the seven worlds of women."

Lewis propped his head on one elbow. Before him

squatted the old woman. Her hands were locked about her legs. Her chin rested on her knees. Her beady eyes shone like two black stars.

"And shall I not read thee a sign?" she continued, swaying from side to side. "Child of love art thou. At thy birth was thy mother rent asunder, for thou wert conceived too near the heart. Thy path through the world is blazed as one blazes a path in the forest. He who is at thy side is before thee and after thee. Thou travelest in darkness, but thou art cursed and blessed with the gift of sight. The worlds of women are seven: spirit, weed, flower, the blind, the visioned, libertine, and saint. None of these is for thee. For each child of love there is a woman that holds the seven worlds within a single breast. Hold fast to thy birthright, even though thou journey with thy back unto the light. I have spoken."

A long silence fell upon the sand-dune. Lewis felt held, oppressed. He was tired. He wished to sleep, but the woman's words rang in his brain like shouts echoing in an empty hall.

Presently came sounds from the mud hut beyond the thorn-thicket. Men were calling. There was the patter and scrape of mules' hoofs, the whistle of those that urged them on. Lewis and the old hag hurried down. The guide, the muleteers, and the stranger were having a wordy struggle.

"Hallo," said the stranger, "where have you been? What are they trying to say? I need you even in my sleep."

"They say," said Lewis, "that there is no help for it; we must push on to the river now. The mules must have water."

"Right you are," said the stranger. He pointed to one heavily laden mule. "We don't need those provisions. Give them to Old Immortality. They 'll last her a hundred years."

CHAPTER XIII

THEY arrived in Petrolina at dawn. Before them swept the vast river. Beyond it could be seen the dazzling walls and restful, brown-tiled roofs of Joazeiro. The distant whistle of a shunting locomotive jarred on the morning stillness.

For the first time Lewis saw the stranger in action. Off came the loads. They were sorted rapidly. Tent, outfit, and baggage were piled into one of the ponderous ferry-canoes that lined the shore. All that was left was handed over to the guide for equal division among the men.

"Now," cried the stranger, "there 's always a market-place. Tell them to take this worn-out bunch along and find the cattle corner." He waved at the ponies and mules.

The market was in full swing. Rubber, goatskins, hides, and orchids from the interior; grain, tobacco, sugar, and rum from the river valley, met, mingled, and passed at this crossways of commerce. The stranger stood beside his mules. The dome of his pith helmet rose above the average level of heads. People gazed upon it in mild wonder, and began to crowd around.

"Now," said the stranger, poking Lewis's thin pony in the ribs, "offer this jack-rabbit for sale, cash and delivery on the minute."

"Offer my—my pony——" stammered Lewis.

The stranger eyed him grimly.

"*Your* pony?"

Suddenly Lewis remembered. He threw up his head and called out as he was bidden. People nudged one another, but no man spoke. Then a wag on the outskirts of the crowd shouted:

"I 'll give thee a penny for what 's left of that horse, brother."

There was a ripple of laughter. Lewis colored, and his eyes grew moist.

"He says he will give a penny," he said.

"A penny?" said the stranger, gravely. "Take it. Cash, mind you. Cash on delivery."

The sale was made amid general consternation. As the dazed wag led his purchase away, he trembled as though from a first stroke of paralysis. The market-place began to buzz, to hum, and then to shout, "A stranger sells horses for a penny, cash on delivery!" They laughed and crowded nearer. Merchants forgot their dignity, and came running from the streets of the town.

"Now, boy, this one," said the stranger, poking a

mule; "but be careful. Be careful to wait for the highest bid."

The stranger's warning came just in time. No sooner had Lewis called the mule for sale than bids rained on him from every side. One after the other, in rapid succession, the animals were sold; but no more went for a penny.

His pockets stuffed with notes and silver, the stranger pushed his way through the crowd, suddenly grown silent. On the way to the river he paid off his men. He climbed into the canoe, and Lewis followed. The boatmen shoved off.

The wag, leading Lewis's pony, had followed them to the river-bank.

"Show me thy hoof, partner," he shouted, laughing, to the stranger. "Thou shouldst deal in souls, not in horses. I would I had shaken thy hand. God go with thee!"

The stranger calmly counted his money.

"Boy," he said, "I have just given you a five-year life in five minutes. Write this down in your mind. In high finance he who knows figures starves on two dollars a day; success comes to him who knows men."

During the long hours in the dirty train that jerked them toward the coast and civilization the stranger began to grow nervous. Lewis looked up more than once to find himself the object of a troubled gaze. They

were the only passengers. There were moments when the road-bed permitted snatches of conversation, but it was during a long stop on a side-track that the stranger unburdened himself.

"Boy," he said, "the time is coming when I must tell you my name."

"I know your name," said Lewis.

"What!" cried the stranger.

"I know your name," repeated Lewis; "it is Leighton."

"How? How do you know?" The stranger was frowning.

"No," said Lewis, quietly; "I have n't been looking through your things. One day my—my foster-father and my foster-mother were talking. They did not know I was near. I did n't realize they were talking about me until mammy spoke up. Mammy is—well, you know, she 's just a mammy——"

"Yes," said the stranger. "What did mammy say?"

"She said," continued Lewis, coloring slightly, "that a Leighton did n't have to have his name written in a family Bible because God never forgets to write it in his face."

"Good for mammy!" said the stranger. "So that 's what they were talking about." For a moment he sat silent and thoughtful; then he said: "Boy, do n't you worry about any family Bible business. Your name 's

written in the family Bible all right. Take it from me; I know. I 'm Glendenning Leighton—your father." His eyes glistened.

"I 'm glad about the name," said Lewis, his face alight. "I 'm glad you 're my dad, too. But I knew that."

"Knew it? How did you know it?"

"The old woman—Old Immortality. Do n't you remember? She said, 'The son is the spit of the father.' "

"Did she?" said Leighton. "Do you believe everything as easily as that?"

"The heart believes easily," said Lewis.

"Eh? Where 'd you get that?"

"I suppose I read it somewhere. I think it is true. She told me my fortune."

"Told you your fortune, did she? I thought I was missing something when I snored the hours away instead of talking to that bright old lady. Fortunes are silly things. Do you remember what she told you?"

"Yes," said Lewis, "I think I remember every word. She said, 'Child of love art thou. At thy birth was thy mother rent asunder, for thou wert conceived too near the heart——' "

"Stop!"

Lewis looked up. His father's face was livid. His breast heaved as though he gasped for air. Then he clenched his fists. Lewis saw the veins on his forehead

swell as he fought for self-mastery. He calmed himself deliberately; then slowly he dropped his face in his hands.

"Some day," he said in a voice so low that Lewis could hardly hear the words, "I shall tell you of your mother. Not now."

Gloom, like a tangible presence, filled the car. It pressed down upon Lewis. He felt it, but in his heart he knew that for him the day was a glad day. The train started. He leaned far out of a window. The evening breeze was blowing from the east. To his keen nostrils came a faint breath of the sea. When he drew his head in again, the twinkle he had already learned to watch for was back in his father's eyes.

"What do you smell, boy?"

"I smell the sea," said Lewis.

"How do you know? How old were you when you made your first voyage?"

"Do n't you know?"

Leighton shook his head.

Lewis, looking at his father with wondering eyes, regretted the spoken question.

"I was three years old. I suppose I remember the smell of the sea, though it seems as if I could n't possibly. I remember the funnel of the steamer, though."

"Seems like looking back on a quite separate life, does n't it?"

"Yes," said Lewis, nodding, "it does."

"Of course it does, and in that fact you 've got the germ of an individual philosophy. Every man who goes through the stress of life has need of an individual philosophy."

"What 's yours, sir?"

"I was going to tell you. Life, to me, is like this train, a lot of sections and a lot of couplings. When you 're through with a car, side-track it and—yank out the coupling. Like all philosophies, this one has its flaw. Once in a while your soul looks out of the window and sees some long-forgotten, side-tracked car beckoning to be coupled on again. If you try to go back and pick it up, you 're done. Never look back, boy; never look back. Live ahead even if you 're only living a compensation."

"What 's a compensation?" asked Lewis.

"A compensation," said Leighton thoughtfully, "is a thing that does n't quite compensate."

Above the rattle of the train sounded the deep bellow of a steamer's throttle. Lewis turned to the window. Night had fallen.

"Oh, look, sir!" he cried. "We 're almost there!"

Leighton joined him. Before them were spangled, in a great crescent, a hundred thousand lights. Along the water-front the lights clustered thickly. They climbed a cliff in long zigzags. At the top they clustered again.

Out on the bay they swayed from halyards, their reflections glimmering back from the rippling water like so many agitated moons.

"Right you are—Bahia," said Leighton. "We 're almost there, and it 's no fishing-hamlet, either."

CHAPTER XIV

THE next morning, as they were sitting, after their coffee and rolls, at a little iron table on the esplanade of the Sul Americano, Leighton said: "It takes a man five years to learn how to travel in a hurry and fifteen more to learn how not to hurry. You may consider that you 've been a traveler for twenty years." He stretched and yawned. "Let 's take a walk, slowly."

They started down the broad incline which, in long, descending zigzags, cut the cliff that divided lower town from upper. The closely laid cobblestones were slippery with age.

"It took a thousand slaves a century to pave these streets," said Leighton. "Do you know anything about this town, Bahia?"

"It was once the capital of the empire," said Lewis.

"Yes," said Leighton. "Capital of the empire, seat of learning, citadel of the church, last and greatest of the great slave-marts. That 's a history. Never bother your mind about a man, a woman, or a town that has n't got a history. They may be happy, but they 're stupid."

The principal street of the lower town was swarming with a strange mixture of humanity. Here and there

hurried a foreigner in whites, his flushed cheeks and nose flying the banner of John Barleycorn.

Along the sidewalks passed leisurely the doctorated product of the universities—doctors of law, doctors of medicine, embryo doctors still in the making—each swinging a light cane. Their black hats and cutaway coats, in the fashion of a temperate clime, would have looked exotic were it not for the serene dignity with which they were worn. With them, merchants lazed along, making a deal as they walked. Clerks, under their masters' eyes, hurried hither and thither.

These were all white or near-white. The middle of the street, which held the great throng, was black. Slaves with nothing on but a loin-cloth staggered under two bags of coffee or under a single monster sack of cocoa. Their sweating torsos gleamed where the slanting sun struck them. Other slaves bore other burdens: a basket of chickens or a bundle of sugar-cane on the way to market; a case of goods headed for the stores of some importer; now and then a sedan-chair, with curtains drawn; and finally a piano, unboxed, on a pilgrimage.

The piano came up the middle of the street borne on the heads of six singing negroes. For a hundred yards they would carry it at a shuffling trot, their bare feet keeping time to their music, then they would set it down and, clapping their hands and still singing, do a shuffle

dance about it. This was the shanty of piano-movers. No other slave dared sing it. It was the badge of a guild.

"D' you hear that?" asked Leighton, nodding his head. "That 's a shanty. They 're singing to keep step."

In shady nooks and corners and in the cool, wide doorways sat still other slaves: porters waiting for a stray job; grayheads, too old for burdens, plaiting baskets; or a fat mammy behind her pot of couscous.

Three porters sat on little benches on the top step of a church porch. Leighton approached one of them.

"Brother," he said, "give me your stool."

The slave rose, and straightened to a great height. He held up his hands for a blessing. He grinned when Leighton sat down on his bench. Then he looked keenly at Lewis's face, and promptly dragged the black at his side to his feet.

"Give thy bench to the young master, thou toad."

Leighton nodded his head.

"No fool, the old boy, eh? The son 's the spit of the father." His eyes swept the swarming street. "What men! What men!" He was looking at the blacks. "Boy, did you ever hear of a general uprising among the slaves at home, in the States?"

"No," said Lewis; "there never was one."

"Exactly," said Leighton. "There never was one

because in the early days our planters found out what not to buy in the way of black meat. They were n't looking for the indomitable spirit. They were n't looking for men, but for slaves, and the black-birders soon learned that if they did n't want to carry their cargo farther than New Orleans they had to load up with members of the gentlest tribes. Now, there have been terrible uprisings of blacks in the West Indies, in Demerara and here. Ask this old chap of what race he is."

Lewis turned and asked the question. The tall black straightened, his face grew stern, his eyes moist.

"Tito, my name. I am of the tribe of Minas. In the time of thy grandfather I was traded as ransom for a king."

"Hm-m, I can believe it," said Leighton. "Now ask the next one, the copper-colored giant."

"And thou?" said Lewis.

"I? I am a Fulah of the Fulahs. Before blacks were, or whites, we were thus, the color of both."

"You see?" said Leighton. "Pride. He was afraid you 'd take him for a mulatto. Now the other fellow, there."

"And thou?" said Lewis.

The third black had remained seated. He turned his eyes slowly to Lewis.

"I am no slave," he began. "I am of the tribe of

Houssa. To my master's wealth I added fifteen of my sons. In the great rebellion they fell, one and all."

"The great rebellion," said Leighton. "He means the last Houssa uprising. Thirty thousand of 'em, and they fought and fell to a man. The Government was glad of the chance to wipe 'em out. Ask him how he escaped."

"Escaped?" The black's eyes gleamed. "Child, I did not escape. My master's son was a babe in arms. My master bade me bear him to safety. When I came back, alone I bore my master to the grave. Then it was too late. They would not kill me. Now the babe is grown. He tells me I am a free man. It is written on paper."

While Leighton and Lewis watched the crowd, they themselves did not remain unnoticed. A small group of the leisurely class began to block the pavement before them. Father and son were a strange pair. Lewis was still in his leather cow-boy clothes. Alone, he would not have attracted more notice than a man with a beard and a carpet-bag on Broadway; but the juxtaposition of pith helmet, a thing unknown in those parts, and countryman's flat leather hat, and the fact of their wearers usurping the seats of two black carriers was too much for one native son, dressed in the latest Paris fashion.

"Thou, porter," he called to Leighton, "an errand

for thee. Go fetch my father. He would not miss this sight."

"What does he say?" asked Leighton.

Lewis blushed as people stopped and added their sparkling eyes to those of the crowd already gathered.

"He calls you a porter, and bids you fetch his father to see the sight."

"Ask him," said Leighton, calmly, "shall I know him who he thinks is his father by his horns?"

Lewis translated innocently enough. The crowd gasped, and then roared with laughter. The youth in Paris clothes turned purple with rage, shook his little cane at Leighton, and burst into abusive language.

"Why," cried Lewis—"why, what 's the matter with him?"

"I'm sure I do n't know," said Leighton, pensively. "And just now he was so dignified!"

A private sedan-chair, borne by four splendid blacks, swung by at a run. As it passed, one of its silk curtains was drawn aside and the face of a woman, curious to see the reason of the crowd, looked out. The face was clear white, blue-veined, red-lipped; under the black eyes were shadows. A slight smile curved the red lips as the shadowy eyes fell upon Leighton and Lewis.

Leighton went tense, like a hound in leash.

"Look, boy!" he cried. "A patrician passes!"

The lady heard, understood. The smile, that was

half-disdain, deepened. She bowed slightly, but graciously. The curtain fell.

"Come, boy," said Leighton, "we can 't stand that. Let 's go find a tailor."

"Dad," said Lewis, "do you know her? She bowed."

"She did, God bless her!" said Leighton. "No, I do n't know her; but let 's think kindly of her, for she has added a charming memory to life."

CHAPTER XV

FOUR days later Lewis sat beside his bed, piled high with all the paraphernalia that go to make up a gentleman's wardrobe and toilet. He was very nervous —so nervous that he had passed an hour striding from one side of the small bedroom to the other, making up his mind to try to carry out his father's instructions, which were simply to go to his room and dress. Lewis had never in his life put on a collar or knotted a tie.

He answered a knock on the door with a cry of dismay. Leighton strode into the room.

"Well, what 's the matter?"

Lewis looked ruefully from his father's face to the things on the bed and back again. He felt himself flushing painfully. He opened his mouth to speak and then closed it.

Suddenly Leighton's face lit up. He laughed.

"Well, well," he cried, "this is splendid! You 've given me a new sensation." He yanked a bath-robe from the bed. "Here, you savage, shed those leather togs, but do n't lose them. You 'll want to take them out and look at them some stuffy day. Now put this on and run to your bath."

When Lewis came back to the room he found most of his things had been packed away in the big, new trunk. On the bed certain garments were laid out. They were laid out in correct order.

Leighton stood beside the bed in a deferential attitude. His face was a blank. "Will you be wearing the white flannels to-night, sir, or the dinner-jacket? If you will allow me, I would suggest the flannels. Sultry evening, and Mr. Leighton will be dining on the terrace."

"Yes, I 'll wear the flannels," stammered Lewis.

"Your singlet, sir," said Leighton, picking up the undershirt from the bed. Article after article he handed to his son in allotted order. Lewis put each thing on as fast as his nervous hands would let him. He tried to keep his eyes from wandering to the head of the line, where lay collar and tie. The collar had been buttoned to the back of the shirt, but when it came to fastening it in front, Lewis's fingers fumbled hopelessly.

"Allow me, sir," said Leighton. He fastened the collar deftly. "I see you do n't like that tie with the flannels, sir. My mistake."

He threw open the trunk, and took out a brown cravat of soft silk. "Your brown scarf, sir. It goes well with the flannels. Will you watch in the glass, sir?" He placed the cravat, measured it carefully, knotted it, and drew it up.

Lewis did not watch in the mirror. His eyes were fixed on his father's mask of a face. He knew that, inside, his father was bubbling with fun; but no ripple showed in his face, no disrespectful twinkle in his eye. Leighton was playing the game. Suddenly, for no reason that he could name, Lewis began to adore his father.

"Will that do, sir?"

"Certainly," stammered Lewis. "Very nicely, thank you."

"Thank *you,* sir," said Leighton. He handed Lewis the flannel trousers and then the coat.

As Lewis finished putting them on, Leighton whirled on his heel.

"Ready, my boy?" The mask was gone.

Lewis laughed back into his father's twinkling eyes.

"Yes, I 'm ready," he said rather breathlessly. He followed his father out of the room. The new clothes gripped him in awkward places, but as he glanced down at the well-pressed flannels, he felt glorified.

That night, while strolling in a back street of the lower town, they discovered a tunnel running into the cliff. At its mouth was a turnstile.

"Shades of Avernus! What's this?" asked Leighton.

Lewis inquired of the gateman.

"It 's an elevator to the upper town," he said.

They paid their fare and walked into the long tunnel. At its end they found a prehistoric elevator and

a terrific stench. Leighton clapped his handkerchief to his nose and dived into the waiting car. Lewis followed him. An attendant started the car, and slowly they crept up and up, two hundred feet, to the crest of the cliff. As they emerged, Leighton let go a mighty breath.

"Holy mackerel!" he said, "and what was that? Ugh! it 's here yet!"

The attendant explained. At the bottom of the shaft was a pit into which sank the great chains of the car. The pit was full of crude castor-oil, cheapest and best of lubricants.

"My boy," said Leighton, as he led the way at a rapid stride toward the hotel, "never confuse the picturesque with the ugly. I can stand a bit of local color in the way of smells, but there 's such a thing as going too far, and that went it. We 'll prepare at once to leave this town. Would you like to go north or south?"

"I do n't know, sir," said Lewis.

"Well, we 'll just climb on board that big double-funnel that came in to-day and leave it to her. What do you say?"

They went south. Four days later, in the early morning, Lewis was wakened by a bath-robe hurled at his head.

"Put that on and come up on deck quick!" commanded his father.

Lewis gasped when he reached the deck. They were

just entering the harbor. On the left, so close that it seemed to threaten them, loomed the Sugar-Loaf. On the right, the wash of the steamer creamed on the rocks of Santa Cruz. Before them opened the mighty bay, dotted with a hundred islands, some crowned with foliage, others with gleaming, white walls, and one with an aspiring minaret. Between water and sky stretched the city. There was no horizon, for the jagged wall of the Organ Mountains towered in a circle into the misty blue. Heaven and earth were one.

A white line of surf-foam ran along all the edge of the bay. Languorous Aphrodite of the cities of the world, Rio de Janeiro lay naked beyond that line, and gloried. Like a dream of fair woman, her feet plunged in foam, her body reclining against the heights, her arms outstretched, green hills for her pillows, her diadem the shining mountain-peaks, queen of the cities of the earth by the gift of Almighty God, she gleamed beneath the kiss of dawn.

Leighton drew a long, long breath.

"It will take a lot of bad smells to blot the memory of *that*," he said.

They came to the bad smells in about an hour and a quarter. An hour later they left the custom-house. Then, each in a rocketing tilbury, driven by a yelling Jehu, they shot through the narrow and filthy streets of the Rio of that far day and drew up, still trembling

with fright, at the doors of the Hotel dos Estrangeiros.

"You got here, too!" cried Leighton as Lewis tumbled out of his cab. "We had both wheels on the ground at once three separate times. How about you?"

"I really don't know anything about what happened, sir," said Lewis, grinning. "I was holding on."

"What were they yelling? Did you make anything out of that?" asked Leighton, when they had surveyed their rooms and were washing.

"They were shouting at the people in the way," said Lewis. "My driver yelled only two things. When a colored person was in the way, it was, 'Melt chocolate-drop!" and when he shouted at a white man, it was: 'Clear the way to hell! a foreigner rides with me.'"

"Boy," said Leighton, speaking through several folds of towel and the open connecting-door, "if you ever find your brains running to seed, get a job as a cabman. There's something about a cab, the world over, that breeds wit."

CHAPTER XVI

THE Rio of 1888 was seething at the vortex of the wordy battle for emancipation. The Ouvidor, the smart street of the town, so narrow that carriages were not allowed upon it, was the center of the maelstrom. Here crowded politician and planter; lawyers, journalists, and students; conservative and emancipationist.

At each end of the Ouvidor were squares where daily meetings were held the emotional surge of which threatened to lap over into revolution at any moment.

The emotion was real. Youths of twenty blossomed into verse never equaled before or since in the writings of their prolific race. An orator, maddened by the limits of verbal expression, shot himself through the heart to add a fitting period to a thundered phrase. Women forgot their own bondage, and stripped themselves of jewels for the cause.

Leighton and his son, wandering through these scenes, felt like ghosts. They had the certainty that all this had happened before. Their lonely, calm faces drew upon them hostile, wondering stares.

"Got a clean tablet in your mind?" asked Leighton

one day as they emerged from an unusually excited scene. "Write this down: Nothing bores one like somebody else's belated emotions. When you've had some woman insist on kissing you after you're tired of her, you'll understand me better. In the meantime, this is bad enough. I can think of only one cure for what we've been through here, and that is a Sunday in London. Let us start."

"London!" breathed Lewis. "Are we going to London?"

"Yes, we are. It 's a peculiar fact, well known and long cursed among travelers, that all the steamers in the world arrive in England on Saturday afternoon. We 'll get to London for Sunday."

During the long voyage, for the first time since the day on which he met the stranger, and which already seemed of long ago, Lewis had time to think. A sadness settled on him. What were they doing at Nadir on this starry night? Were the goats corraled? Who had brought them in? Was mammy crooning songs of low-swinging chariots and golden stairs? Was Mrs. Leighton still patiently sewing? The Reverend Orme, was he still sitting scowling and staring and staring? And Natalie? Was she there, or was she gone, married? He drew a great, quivering sigh.

Leighton looked around.

"Trying to pick up a side-tracked car?"

Lewis smiled faintly, but understandingly.

"It 's not quite side-tracked—yet," he said.

"Ah, boy, never look back," said Leighton. "But, no; do. Do look back. You 're young yet. Tell me about it."

Then for a long time Lewis talked of Nadir: of the life there, of the Reverend Orme, grown morose through unnamed troubles; of Mrs. Leighton, withered away till naught but patience was left; of happy mammy, grown sad; of Natalie, friend, playmate, and sacrifice.

"So they wanted to marry your little pal into motherhood twenty times over, ready-made," said Leighton. "And you fought them, told 'em what you thought of it. You were right, boy; you were right. The wilderness must have turned their heads. But you ought to have stayed with it. Why did n't you stay with it? You 're no quitter."

"There were things I said to the Reverend Orme," said Lewis, slowly—"things I knew, that made it impossible for me to stay."

"Things you knew? What things?"

Lewis did not answer.

It was on a gray Sunday that they entered London. In a four-wheeler, the roof of which groaned under a pyramid of baggage, they started out into the mighty silence of deserted streets. The *plunk! plunk!* of the

horse's shod hoofs crashed against the blank walls of the shuttered houses and reverberated ahead of them until sound dribbled away down the gorge of the all-embracing nothing. Gray, gray; heaven and earth and life were gray.

Lewis felt like crying, but Leighton came to the rescue. He was in high spirits.

"Boy, look out of the window. Is there anywhere in the world a youth spouting verse on a street corner?"

"No," said Lewis.

"Or an orator shooting himself to give point to an impassioned speech?"

"No."

"Or women shaking their bangles into the melting-pot for the cause of freedom?"

"No."

"I should say not. This is Sunday in London. Take off your hat. You are in the graveyard of all the emotions of the earth."

Up one flight of stairs, over a tobacconist's shop, Leighton raised and dropped the massive bronze knocker on a deep-set door. He saw Lewis's eyes fix on the ponderous knocker.

"Strong door to stand it, eh? They don't make 'em that way any more."

The door swung open. A man-servant in black bowed as Leighton entered.

"Glad to welcome you back, sir. I hope you are well, sir."

"Thanks, Nelton, I 'm well as well. So is Master Lewis. Got his room ready? Show him the bath."

Lewis, looking upon Nelton, suddenly remembered a little room in the Sul Americano at Bahia. He felt sure that when Nelton opened his mouth it would be to say, "Will you be wearing the white flannels to-night, sir, or the dinner-jacket?"

By lunch-time Leighton's high spirits were on the decline, by four o'clock they had struck bottom. He kept walking to the windows, only to turn his back quickly on what he saw. At last he said:

"D' you know what a 'hundred to one shot' is?"

"No, sir," said Lewis.

"Well," said Leighton, "watch me play one." He sat down, wrote a hurried note, and sent it out by Nelton. "The chances, my boy, are one hundred to one that the lady 's out of town."

When Nelton came back with an answer, Leighton scarcely stopped to open it.

"Come on, boy," he called, and was off. By the time Lewis reached the street, his father was stepping into a cab. Lewis scrambled after him.

"Does n't seem proper, Dad, to rush through a graveyard this way."

"Graveyard? It is n't a graveyard any more. I 'll prove it to you in a minute."

It was more than a minute before they pulled up at a house that seemed to belie Leighton's promise. Its door was under a massive portico the columns of which rose above the second story. The portico was flanked by a parapeted balcony, upon which faced, on each side, a row of French windows, closed and curtained, but not shuttered.

CHAPTER XVII

LEIGHTON rang. The door was opened by a man in livery. So pompous was he that Lewis gazed at him open-mouthed. He could hardly tear his eyes from him to follow his father, who was being conducted by a second footman across the glassy, waxed hall into a vast drawing-room.

The drawing-room might have been a tomb for kings, but Lewis felt more awed by it than depressed. It was a room of distances. Upon its stately walls hung only six paintings and a tapestry. Leighton did not tell his son that the walls carried seven fortunes, because he happened to be one of those who saw them only as seven things of joy.

There were other things in the room besides the pictures: a few chairs, the brocade of which matched the tapestry on the wall; an inlaid spinet; three bronzes. Before one of the bronzes Lewis stopped involuntarily. From its massive, columned base to the tip of the living figure it was in one piece. Out of the pedestal itself writhed the tortured, reaching figure—aspiring man held to earth. Lewis stretched out a reverent hand as though he would touch it.

The lackey had thrown open a door and stood waiting. Leighton turned and called:

"Come on, boy."

Lewis followed them through a second drawing-room and into a library. Here they were asked to sit. Never had Lewis dreamed of such a room. It was all in oak —in oak to which a century of ripening had given a rare flower.

There was only one picture, and that was placed over the great fireplace. It was the portrait of a beautiful woman—waves of gray hair above a young face and bright black eyes. The face laughed at them and at the rows upon rows of somber books that reached from floor to ceiling.

Before the fireplace were two leather chairs and a great leather couch. At each end of the couch stood lighted lamps, shaded to a deep-amber glow.

The lackey returned.

"Her ladyship waits for you in her room, sir."

Leighton nodded, and led Lewis down a short hall. The library had been dark, the hall was darker. Lewis felt depressed. He heard his father knock on a door and then open it. Lewis caught his breath.

The door had opened on a little realm of light. Fresh blue and white cretonnes and chintzes met his unaccustomed eyes; straight chairs, easy-chairs, and deep, low comfy chairs; airy tables, the preposterously slender legs

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of which looked frail and were not; books, paper-backed, and gay magazines; a wondrous, limpid cheval-glass.

Across the farther side of the room was a very wide window. Through its slender gothic panes one saw a walled lawn and a single elm. Beside the window and half turned toward it, so that the light fell across her face, sat the woman of the portrait.

"How do!" she cried gaily to Leighton, and held out her hand. She did not rise.

"Hélène," said Leighton, "your room 's so cursedly feminine that it 's like an assault for a man to enter it."

"I can 't give you credit for that, Glen," said the lady, laughing. "You 've had a year to think it up. Where have you been? That 's right. Sit down, light up, and talk."

Leighton nodded over his shoulder at Lewis.

"Been fetching him."

"So this is the boy, is it?" The bright eyes stopped smiling. For an instant they became shrewd. They swept Lewis from head to foot and back again. Lewis bowed, and then stood very straight. He felt the color mounting in his cheeks. The smile came back to the lady's eyes.

"Sit down, boy," she said.

For an hour Lewis sat on the edge of a chair and listened to a stream of questions and chatter. The chatter was Greek to him. It skimmed over the surface

of things like a swift skater over thin ice. It never broke into deep waters, but somehow you knew the deep waters were there.

At last Leighton arose.

"Boy," he said, "come here. This lady is my pal. There are times when a man has to tell things to a woman. That 's what women are for. When you feel you 've got to tell things to a woman, you come and tell them to Hélène. Don't be afraid of that peacock of a doorman; push him over. He 's so stiff he 'll topple easy."

"Oh, please do n't ever!" cried the lady, turning to Lewis. "I 'll give you money to tip him." She turned back to Leighton. "They 're so hard to get with legs, Glen."

"Legs be hanged!" said Leighton. "Our age is trading civility for legs. The face that welcomes you to a house should be benign——"

"There you go," broke in the lady. "If you 'd think a minute, you would realize that we do n't charter doormen to welcome people, but to keep them out." She turned to Lewis. "But not you, boy. You may come any time except between nine and ten. That 's when I have my bath. What 's your name? I can 't call you boy forever."

"Lewis."

"Well, Lew, you may call me Hélène, like your father. It 'll make me feel even younger than I am."

"Hélène is a pretty name," said Lewis.

"None of that, young man," said Leighton. "You 'll call Hélène my Lady."

"That 's a pretty name, too," said Lewis.

"Yes," said the lady, rising and holding out her hand, "call me that—at the door."

"Dad," said Lewis as they walked back to the flat, "does she live all alone in that big house?"

Leighton came out of a reverie.

"That lady, Lew, is Lady Hélène Derl. She is the wife of Lord Derl. You won't see much of Lord Derl, because he spends most of his time in a sort of home for incurables. His hobby is faunal research. In other words, he 's a drunkard. Bah! We won't talk any more about *that.*"

CHAPTER XVIII

A FEW months later, when Lewis had very much modified his ideas of London, he was walking with his father in the park at the hour which the general English fitness of things assigns to the initiated. A very little breaking in and a great deal of tailoring had gone a long way with Lewis. Men looked at father and son as though they thought they ought to recognize them even if they did n't. Women turned kindly eyes upon them.

The morning after Lady Derl took Lewis into her carriage in the park she received three separate notes from female friends demanding that she "divvy up." Knowing women in general and the three in special, she prepared to comply. Often Lewis and his father had been summoned by a scribbled note for pot-luck with Lady Derl; but this time it was a formal invitation, engraved.

Lewis read his card casually. His face lighted up. Leighton read his with deeper perception, and frowned.

"Already!" he grunted. Then he said: "When you 've finished breakfast, come to my den. I want to talk to you."

Lewis found his father sitting like a judge on the bench, behind a great oak desk he rarely used. An envelope, addressed, lay before him. He rang for Nelton and sent it out.

"Sit down," he said to Lewis. "Where did you get your education? By education I don't mean a knowledge of knives, forks, and fish-eaters. That 's from Ann Leighton, of course. Nor do I mean the power of adding two to two or reciting A B C D, etc. By education a gentleman means skill in handling life."

"And have I got it?" asked Lewis, smiling.

"You meet life with a calmness and deftness unusual in a boy," said Leighton, gravely.

"I—I do n't know," began Lewis. "I 've never been educated. By the time I was nine I knew how to read and write and figure a little. After that—you know—I just sat on the hills for years with the goats. I read the Reverend Orme's books, of course."

"What were the books?"

"There were n't many," said Lewis. "There was the Bible, of course. There was a little set of Shakspere in awfully fine print and a set of Walter Scott."

Leighton nodded. "The Bible is essential but not educative until you learn to depolarize it. Shakspere —you 'll begin to read Shakspere in about ten years. Walter Scott. Scott—well—Scott is just a bright ax for the neck of time. What else did you read?"

"I read 'The City of God' but not very often."

For a second Leighton stared; then he burst into laughter. He checked himself suddenly.

"Boy," he said, "do n't misunderstand. I 'm not laughing at the book; I 'm laughing at your reading St. Augustine even 'not very often!' "

"Why should n't you laugh?" asked Lewis, simply. "I laughed sometimes. I remember I always laughed at the heading to the twenty-first book."

"Did you?" said Leighton, a look of wonder in his face. "What is it? I do n't quite recollect the headings that far."

" 'Of the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell, and of the various objections urged against it,' " quoted Lewis, smiling.

Leighton grinned his appreciation.

"There is a flavor about unconscious humor," he said, "that 's like the bouquet to a fine wine: only the initiated catch it. I 'm afraid you were an educated person even before you read St. Augustine. Did he put up a good case for torment? You see, you 've found me out. I 've never read him."

"His case was weak in spots," said Lewis. "His examples from nature, for instance, proving that bodies may remain unconsumed and alive in fire."

"Yes?" said Leighton.

"He starts out, 'if, therefore the salamander lives in

fire, as naturalists have recorded——' I looked up salamander in the dictionary."

Lewis's eyes were laughing, but Leighton's grew suddenly grave. "Poor old chap!" he said. "He did n't know that time rots the sanest argument. 'Oh . . . that mine adversary had written a book,' cried one who knew."

Leighton sat thoughtful for a moment, then he threw up his head.

"Well," he said, "we 'll give up trying to find out how you got educated. Let 's change the subject. Has it occurred to you that at any moment you may be called upon to support yourself?"

"It did once," said Lewis, "when I started for Oeiras. Then I met you. You have n't given me time or—or cause to think about it since. I 'm—I 'm not ungrateful——".

"That 's enough," broke in Leighton. "Let 's stick to the point. It 's a lucky thing for the progress of the world that riches often take to the wing. It may happen to any of us at any time. The amount of stupidity that sweating humanity applies to the task of making a living is colossal. In about a million years we 'll learn that making a living consists in knowing how to do well any necessary thing. It 's harder for a gentleman to make a living than for a farm-hand. But —come with me."

He took Lewis to a certain Mecca of mighty appetites in the Strand. Before choosing a table, he made the round of the roasts, shoulders and fowl. They were in great domed, silver salvers, each on a barrow, each kept hot over lighted lamps.

Leighton seated himself and ordered.

"Now, boy, without staring take a good look at the man that does the carving."

One of the barrows was trundled to their table. An attendant lifted the domed cover with a flourish. With astounding rapidity the carver took an even cut from the mighty round of beef, then another. The cover was clapped on again, and the barrow trundled away.

"You saw him?" asked Leighton.

Lewis nodded.

"Well, that chap got through twenty thousand a year, —pounds, not dollars,—capital and income, in just five years. After that he starved. I know a man that lent him half a crown. The borrower said he 'd live on it for a week. Then he found out that, despite being a gentleman, there was one little thing he could do well. He could make a roast duck fall apart as though by magic, and he could handle a full-sized carving-knife with the ease and the grace of a duchess handling a fan. Now he 's getting eight hundred a year—pounds again—and all he can eat."

From the eating-house Leighton took Lewis to his

club. He sought out a small room that is called the smoking-room to this day, relic of an age when smokers were still a race apart. In the corner sat an old man reading. He was neatly dressed in black. Beside him was a decanter of port.

Leighton led the way back to the lounge-room.

"Well, did you see him?"

"The old man?" said Lewis. "Yes, I saw him."

"That's Old Ivory," said Leighton. "He 's an honorable. He was cursed by the premature birth—to him—of several brothers. In other words, he 's that saddest of British institutions, a younger son. His brothers, the other younger sons, are still eating out of the hand of their eldest brother, Lord Bellim. But not Old Ivory. He bought himself an annuity ten years ago. How did he do it? Well, he had enough intelligence to realize that he had n't much. He decided he could learn to shoot well at fifty yards. He did. Then he went after elephants, and got 'em, in a day when they shipped ivory not by the tusk, but by the ton, and sold it at fifteen shillings a pound." As they walked back to the flat, Leighton said: "Now, take your time and think. Is there anything you know how to do well?"

"Nothing," stammered Lewis — "nothing except goats."

"Ah, yes, goats," said Leighton, but his thoughts were not on goats. Back in his den, he took from a drawer

in the great oak desk the kid that Lewis had molded in clay and its broken legs, for another had gone. He looked at the fragments thoughtfully. "To my mind," he said, "there is little doubt but that you could become efficient at terra-cotta designing; you might even become a sculptor."

"A sculptor!" repeated Lewis, as though he voiced a dream.

Leighton paid no attention to the interruption. "I hesitate, however, to give you a start toward art because you carry an air of success with you. One predicts success for you too—too confidently. And success in art is a formidable source of danger."

"Success a source of danger, Dad?"

"In art," corrected Leighton.

"Yesterday," he continued, "you wanted to stop at a shop window, and I would n't let you. The window contained an inane repetition display of thirty horrible prints at two and six each of Lalan's 'Triumph.'" Leighton sprang to his feet. "God! Poster lithographs at two and six! Boy, Lalan's 'Triumph' *was* a triumph once. He turned it into a mere success. Before the paint was dry, he let them commercialize his picture, not in sturdy, faithful prints, but in that—that rubbish."

Leighton strode up and down the room, his arms behind him, his eyes on the floor.

"Taking art into the poor man's home, they call it. Bah! If you multiply the greatest glory that the genius of man ever imprisoned, and put it all over the walls of your house,—bath, kitchen and under the bed,—you 'll find the mean level of that glory is reduced to the terms of the humblest of household utensils."

A smile flickered in Lewis's eyes, but Leighton did not look up.

"Art is never a constant," he continued. "It feeds on spirit, and spirit is evanescent. A truly great picture should be seen by the comparative few. What every one possesses is necessarily a commonplace.

"And now, to get back. I have never talked seriously to you before; I may never do it again. The essence, the distinctive finesse, of breeding, lies in a trained gaiety and an implied sincerity. But what I must say to you is this: Even in this leveling age there are a few of us who look with terror upon an incipient socialism; who believe money as money to be despicable and food and clothing, incidental; who abhor equality, cherish sorrow and suffering and look upon education —knowledge of living before God and man—as the ultimate and only source of content. That 's a creed. I 'd like to have you think on it. I 'd like to have my boy join the Old Guard. Do you begin to see how success in art may become a danger?"

"Yes," said Lewis, "I think I do. I think you mean that—that in selling art one is apt to sell one's self."

"H—m—m!" said Leighton, "you are older than I am. I 'll take you to Paris to-morrow."

Nelton knocked, and threw open the door without waiting for an answer.

"Her ladyship," he announced.

Lady Derl entered. She was looking very girlish in a close-fitting, tailored walking-suit. The skirt was short—the first short skirt to reach London. Beneath it could be seen her very pretty feet. They walked excitedly.

Lady Derl was angry. She held a large card in her hand. She tore it into bits and tossed it at Leighton's feet.

"Glen," she said, "do n't you ever dare to send me one of your engraved 'regrets' again. Why—why you 've been rude to me!"

Leighton hung his head. For one second Lewis had the delightful sensation of taking his father for a brother and in trouble.

"Hélène," said Leighton. "I apologize humbly and abjectly. I thought it would amuse you."

"Apologies are hateful," said Lady Derl. "They 're so final. To see a fine young quarrel, in the prime of life, die by lightning—sad! sad!" She started drawing off her gloves. "Let 's have tea." As she poured

tea for them she asked, "And what 's the real reason you two are n't coming to my dinner?"

Leighton picked up the maimed kid and laid it on the tea-tray. He nodded toward Lewis.

"He made it. I 'm going to gamble a bit on him."

"Poor little thing!" said Lady Derl, poking the two-legged kid with her finger.

"I 'm going to put him under Le Brux,—Saint Anthony,—if he 'll take him," continued Leighton. "We leave for Paris to-morrow."

"Under Saint Anthony?" repeated Lady Derl. "H—m—m! Perhaps you are right. But Blanche, Berthe, and Vi will hold it against me."

When Lewis was alone with his father, he asked: "Does Lady Derl belong to the Old Guard?"

"You would n't think it, but she does," said Leighton,—"inside."

CHAPTER XIX

MY boy," said Leighton to Lewis two days later, as they were threading a narrow street in the shadow of Montmartre, "you will meet in a few moments Le Brux, the only living sculptor. You will call him *Maître* from the start. If he cuffs you or swears at you, call him *Mon Maître.* That 's all the French you will need for some months."

Leighton dodged by a sleepy concierge with a grunted greeting and climbed a broad stone stairway, then a narrower flight. He knocked on a door and opened it. They passed into an enormous room, cluttered, if such space could be said to be cluttered, with casts, molding-boards, clay, dry and wet, a throne, a couch, a workman's bench, and some dilapidated chairs. A man in a smock stood in the midst of the litter.

When Lewis's eye fell upon him as he turned toward them, the room suddenly became dwarfed. The man was a giant. A tremendous head, crowned with a mass of grayish hair, surmounted a monster body. The voice, when it came, did justice to such a frame. "My old one, my friend, Létonne! Thou art well come. Thou art the saving grace to an idle hour."

Once more Lewis sat for a long time listening to chatter that was quite unintelligible. But he scarcely listened, for his eyes had robbed his brain of action. They roamed and feasted upon one bit of sculpture after another. Casts, discarded in corners, gleamed through layers of dust that could not hide their wondrous contour. Others hung upon the wall. Some were fragments. A monster group, half finished, held the center of the floor. A ladder was beside it.

Leighton got up and strolled around. "What 's new?" he asked. His eyes fell on the cast of an arm, a fragment. The arm was outstretched. It was the arm of a woman. So lightly had it been molded that it seemed to float. It seemed pillowed on invisible clouds.

"*Maître,*" said Leighton, "I want that. How much?"

Le Brux moved over beside the cast. As he approached it, Lewis stared at his bulk, at his hairy chest, showing at the open neck of his smock, at his great, nervous hands, and wondered if this could be the creator of so soft a dream in clay.

"Bah! That?" said Le Brux. "It is only a trifle. Take it. It is thine."

"I 'll tell you what we 'll do," said Leighton. "You lend me the arm, and I 'll lend you a thousand francs."

"Done!" cried Le Brux, with a laugh that shook heaven and earth. "Ah, rascal, thou knowest that I never pay."

As they went the rounds of the atelier, Lewis saw that his father was growing nervous. Finally, Leighton drew from his pocket the little kid and its two broken legs. He held the lot out to Le Brux. The fragments seemed to dwindle to pin-points in Le Brux's vast hand.

"Well," he asked, "what 's this?"

Leighton nodded toward Lewis,

"My boy made that."

Le Brux glanced down at his hand. A glint of interest lighted his eyes and passed. Then a tremendous frown darkened his brow.

"A pupil, eh? Bah!" With his thumb and forefinger he crushed the kid to powder. "I 'll take no pupil."

Lewis gulped in dismay at seeing his kid demolished, but not so Leighton. He had noted the glint of interest. He turned on Le Brux.

"You 'll take no pupil, eh? All right, do n't. But you 'll take my son. You shall and you will."

"I will not," growled Le Brux.

"*Maître,*" began Leighton—"but whom am I calling *Maître?* What are you? D' you know what you are?" He shook his finger in Le Brux's face. "You think you 're a creator, but you 're not. You 're nothing but a palimpsest, the record of a single age. What are your works but one man's thumb-print on the face of time?

Here I am giving you a chance to *be* a creator, to breed a live human that will carry on the torch—that will—"

Le Brux had seated himself heavily on the couch. He held his massive head between his hands and groaned.

"Ah, Létonne," he interrupted, "our old friendship is dead—dead by violence. Friends have said things to me before,—called me names,—and I have stood it. But none of them ever dared call me a palimpsest. Thou hast called me a palimpsest!"

Leighton seemed not to hear.

"Somebody," he continued, "that will carry on the mighty tradition of Le Brux. I could take a pupil to any one of a lot of whipper-snappers that fondle clay, but *my son* I bring to you. Why? Because you are the greatest living sculptor? No. No great sculptor ever made another. If my boy 's to be a sculptor, the only way you could stop him would be to choke him to death."

"I had n't thought of that," broke in Le Brux, with a look of relief. "If he bothers me, eh? It would be easy."

In a flash Leighton was all smiles.

"So," he said, "it is settled. Lewis you stay here. If he throws you out, come back again."

"Eh! eh!" cried Le Brux, "not so fast. Listen. This is the most I can do. I 'll let him stay here. I 'll

give him the room down the hall that I rent to keep any one else out, and—and—I'll use him for a model."

Leighton shrugged his shoulders.

"So, let it be so," he said. "The boy will make his own way into your big, hollow heart, and use it for a playroom. But just remember, *Maître,* that he *is* a boy—*my* boy. If he is to go in for all this,"—Leighton waved his hand at the casts,—"I want him to start in with a man who sees art and art only, a man who did n't turn beast the first time he realized God did n't create woman with petticoats."

Le Brux's eyes bulged with comprehension. He thumped his resounding chest.

"Me!" he cried—"me, a wet nurse!" He yanked open another button of his smock. "Behold me! Have I the attributes?"

Leighton turned his back on him.

"Now you are ranting," he said. He picked up an old newspaper from the floor and started to wrap up the cast he had bought. "Now listen, *Maître.* Go and dress yourself for a change. The boy and I will spend a few hours looking for a fiacre that will stand the weight. Then we 'll come back, and I 'll take you out for a drive to a place where you can remind yourself what a tree looks like. I 'll also give you a dinner that you could n't order in an hour with Carême holding your hand."

"Ah, *mon enfant,*" sighed Le Brux, folding his hands across his stomach, "thou hast struck me below the belt. Thou knowest that my memory is not so short but what I will dine with thee."

When at seven o' clock the three sat down at a table which, like everything else that came in contact with Le Brux, seemed a size too small, Leighton said to his guest:

"*Maître,* it has been my endeavor to provide to-night a single essence from each of the five great epochs of modern cookery."

"Yes, my child?" said Le Brux, gravely, but with an expectant gleam in his eye.

"In no branch of science," continued Leighton, "have progress and innovation been so constantly associated as in gastronomy, and we shall consequently abandon the rule of the savants of the last generation and proceed from the light to the less light and then to the rich."

"I agree," said Le Brux.

Leighton nodded to the attendant. Soup was served.

"*Crême d'asperges à la reine,*" murmured Le Brux. "Friend, is it not a source of regret that with the exception of the swallows'-nest extravaganza and your American essence of turtle, no soup has yet been invented the price of which is not within the reach of the common herd? I predict that even this dream of a

master will become a commonplace within a generation."

"I am sorry," said Leighton, "that the boy can't understand you. Your remark caps an argument I had with him the other day on the evanescent spirit in art."

The fish arrived.

"The only fish," remarked Leighton, "that can properly be served without a sauce."

"And why?" said Le Brux, helping himself to the young trout fried in olive oil and simply garnished with lemon. "I will tell thee. Because God himself hath half prepared the dish, giving to this dainty creature a fragrance which assails the senses of man and adds to eating a vision of purling brooks and overhanging boughs." Suddenly, with his fork half-way to his mouth, he paused, and glared at Lewis, who was on the point of helping himself. *"Sacrilège!"*

Leighton looked up.

"My old one, you are perhaps right." He turned to Lewis. "Better skip the fish." At the next dish he remarked, "Following the theory that a dinner should progress as a child learning to walk, *Maître,* I have at this point dared to introduce an entremets—*cèpes francs à la tête noire*——"

"À la bordelaise," completed Le Brux, his nose

above the dish. He helped Leighton to half of its contents and himself to the rest.

"Have patience, my old one," cried Leighton, "the boy may have an uneducated palate, but he is none the less possessed of a sublobular void that demands filling at stated intervals."

"Bah!" cried Le Brux, "order him a dish of tripe with onions—and *vin ordinaire*. But he 'll have to sit at another table."

"No," said Leighton, "that won't do. We 'll let him sit here and watch us. and when they come, we 'll give him all the sweets and we 'll watch him."

"Agreed," said Le Brux.

CHAPTER XX

IF events had been moving rapidly with Lewis, they had by no means been at a standstill at Nadir since that troubled day on which he had rebelled, quarreled, and fled, leaving behind him wrath and tears and awakened hearts where all had been apathy and somnolence.

Many happenings at Nadir were dated from the day that Lewis went away. Late that night mammy and Mrs. Leighton, aided by trembling Natalie, had had to carry the Reverend Orme from his chair in the school-room to his bed. The left side of his face was drawn grotesquely out of line, but despite the disfigurement, there was a look of peace in his ravaged countenance, as of one who welcomes night joyfully and calmly after a long battle.

Perhaps it was this look of peace that made Ann Leighton regard this latest as the lightest of all the calamities that had fallen upon her frail shoulders. She felt that in a measure the catastrophe had brought the Reverend Orme back—nearer to her heart. Her heart, which had seemed to atrophy and shrivel from disuse since the poignant fullness of the last days of Shenton, was suddenly revivified. Love, pity, tender care,—all

the discarded emotions,—returned to light up her withered face and give it beauty. Night and day she stayed beside the Reverend Orme, reading aright his slightest movement.

To Natalie one need stood out above all others—the need for Lewis. At first she waited for news of him, but none came; then she sought out Dom Francisco. Word was passed to the cattlemen. They said Lewis had been bound for Oeiras. A messenger was sent to Oeiras. He came back with the news that Lewis had never arrived there. He had been traced half-way. After that no one on the long straight trail had seen the boy. The wilderness had swallowed him.

Dom Francisco came almost daily to see the Reverend Orme. "Behold him!" he cried at his first visit, aghast at the havoc the stroke had played with the tall frame. "He is but a boy, he has fathered but two children—and yet—behold him! He is broken!" The sight of the Reverend Orme, suddenly grown pitifully old, seemed to work on the white-haired, but sturdy, cattle-king by reflection. He, too, grew old suddenly.

Natalie was the first to notice it. She began to nurse the old man as she nursed her father,—to treat him as she would a child. When one day he spoke almost tremulously of the marriage that was to be, she did not even answer him, contenting herself with the smile with which one humors extreme youth clamoring for

the moon. Gradually, without any discussion or open refusal on the part of Natalie, it became understood not only to Dom Francisco, but to all the circle at Nadir, that she would never marry the old cattle-king.

The sudden departure of Lewis, the Reverend Orme's breakdown, with its intimate worry displacing all lesser cares, the absorption of Ann Leighton as her husband's constant attendant—these things made of Natalie a woman in a night. She assumed direction of the house, and calmly ordered mammy around in a way that warmed that old soul, born to cheerful servitude. She hired a goatherd and rigidly oversaw his handiwork. Then she approached Dom Francisco one evening as he sat at her father's bedside and told him that he must find a purchaser for the goats—all of them.

The Reverend Orme, although he heard, took no interest in any temporal affair. Mrs. Leighton looked up and asked mildly:

"Why, dear?"

"Because we need money," said Natalie. "No doctor would come here. We must take father away."

No one recoiled from the idea; but it was new to them all except Natalie. It took days and days for it to sink in. It was on Dom Francisco that Natalie most exerted herself. He had aged, and age had made him weak. He fell a slow, but easy, prey to her youth, grown sweetly dominant. He himself would arrange

to buy the enormous herd of goats, the greatest in the country-side. And, finally, with a great shrinking from the definite implication, he agreed to buy back Nadir as well.

No mere argument could have led the old man to such a concession. It was love—love for these strangers that he had cherished within his gates, love for the gloomy man whom he had seen young and then old, love for Ann and Natalie and mammy, with their quiet ways, love for the very way of life of all of them—a way distantly above anything he had ever dreamed before their coming, that drove him, almost against his will, to speed their parting. He sent for money. He himself spent long, wistful hours preparing the ox-wagon, the litter, and the horses that were to bear them away.

Then one night the Reverend Orme slept and awoke no more. In the morning Natalie went into the room and found her mother sitting very still beside the bed, one of the Reverend Orme's hands in both of hers. Tears followed each other slowly down her cheeks. She did not brush them away.

"Mother!" cried Natalie, in the first grip of premonition.

"Hush, dear!" said Mrs. Leighton. "He is gone."

They buried him at the very top of the valley, where the eye, guided by the parallel hills, sought ever and again the great mountain thirty miles away. In that

clear air the distant mountain seemed very near. There were those who said they could see the holy cross upon its brow.

That night Mrs. Leighton and mammy sat idle and staring in the house. Suddenly they had realized that for them the years of tears had passed. They looked at each other and wondered by what long road calm had come to them. Not so Natalie. Natalie was out in the night, out upon the hills.

She climbed the highest of them all. As she stumbled up the rise, she lifted her eyes to the stars. The stars were very high, very far, very cold. They struck at her sight like needles.

Natalie covered her eyes. She stood on the crest of the hill. Her glorious hair had fallen and wrapped her with its still mantle. Her slight breast was heaving. She could hear her struggling heart pounding at its cage. She drew a long breath. With all the strength of her young lungs she called: "Lew, where are you? O, Lew, you *must* come! O, Lew, I *need* you!"

The low hills gave back no echo. It was not silence that swallowed her desperate cry, but distance, overwhelming distance. She stared wide-eyed across the plain. Suddenly faith left her. She knew that Lewis could not hear. She knew that she was alone. She crumpled into a little heap on the top of the highest hill, buried her face in her soft hair, and sobbed.

The conviction that their wilderness held Lewis no longer brought a certain strength to Natalie's sudden womanhood. It was as though Fate had cried to her, "The burden is all thine; take it up," and with the same breath had given her the sure courage that comes with renunciation. She answered Dom Francisco's wistful questioning before it could take shape in words.

"We cannot stay," she said. "We must go. You will still help us to go."

Nature's long silences breed silence in man. Dom Francisco ceased to question even with his eyes. He made all ready, delivered them into the hands of trusted henchmen, and bade them God's speed. They struck out for the sea, but not by the long road that Lewis and the stranger had followed. There was a nearer Northern port. Toward it they set their faces, Consolation Cottage their goal.

CHAPTER XXI

THREE weeks to a day from the time he had left Lewis in Paris, as Nelton was serving him with breakfast, Leighton received a telegram that gave him no inconsiderable shock. The telegram was from Le Brux.

"Come at once," it said; "your son has killed me."

Leighton steadied himself with the thought that Le Brux was still alive enough to wire before he said:

"Nelton, I 'm off for Paris at once. You have half an hour to pack and get me to Charing Cross."

Nine hours later he was taking the stairs at Le Brux's two steps at a time. As he approached the atelier, he heard sighing groans. He threw open the door without knocking. Stretched on the couch was the giant frame, wallowing feebly like a harpooned whale at the last gasp.

"*Maître!*" cried Leighton.

The sculptor half raised himself, turned a worn face on Leighton, and then burst into a tremendous laugh —one of those laughs that is so violent as to be painful.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!" he roared, and fell back upon his side.

Leighton felt somebody pecking at his arm. He turned, to find the old concierge beside him.

"Oh, sir," she almost wept, "can't you do something? He has been like that all day."

"Go," he said, "bring me a pail of water." He stood watching Le Brux until she returned. "Now," he said, "go out and close the door after you."

"Don't be rough with him," sighed the fat concierge as she waddled toward the door, drying her hands on her apron.

"Le Brux," said Leighton, "Le Brux!"

"Yes, I hear," gasped the sculptor, his eyes tight shut.

"Le Brux, where is your wound?"

"My wound? Ha! my wound! He would know where is my wound! Here, here, my old one, here!" He passed his two hands over his shaking ribs.

"Well, then," said Leighton, "take that!" and he dashed the pail of water over the prostrate giant.

Le Brux gasped, gulped, and then sat up on the couch. He suddenly became very grave. Water trickled off his chin upon his hairy chest. The soaked smock clung to his arms and legs, accentuating the tremendous muscles. "M'sieu' Létonne," he said, with alarming calm, "you have committed an unpardonable impertinence. At the same time you have unwittingly saved

my life. You have heard of men, strong men, laughing themselves to death?"

Leighton, who had seated himself, bowed.

"Well," continued Le Brux, "I can assure you that you and your pail of slops arrived only in time to avert a tragedy. That fact entitles itself to recognition, and I am consequently going to tell you all that has happened before we part—definitely."

Leighton bowed again.

"As you prophesied, your boy won his way into my foolish heart. I used him as a model frequently, and let him hang around me in my idle moments. I even gave him clay to play with, and he played with it to some effect, his great fault—and it is a very great one—being a tendency to do things in miniature. I reproved him good-naturedly—for me, and he so far improved as to model a horse—the size of the palm of your hand."

Leighton bowed once more in recognition of the pause.

"One day," continued Le Brux, "the boy rushed in here without knocking. He had something to show me. I did not have the hardihood to rebuke him, but, remembering myself in the quality of wet nurse, I was dismayed, for on this very couch lay Cellette—Cellette *simple,* without garnishings, you understand. She was lying on her front, her chin in her hand, and reading

a book. I let her read a book, when I can, for my own peace.

"Well, the boy showed me what he had to show, and that gave me time to collect my wits. I saw him look at Cellette without a tremor, and just as I was deciding to take the moment by the horns, he did it for me. 'Oh,' he said, 'are you working on her? *Mon maître,* please let me watch!' A vile tongue, English, to understand, but it was easy to read his eyes. I said, 'Watch away, my child,' and I continued to transmit Cellette to the cloud up there in my big group. The boy stood around. When I glanced at the model, his eyes followed. When I worked, he worked with me.

"My old one, you may believe it or not, but I felt that boy's fingers itching all the time. Finally, I chucked a great lump of clay upon the bench yonder, and I said, 'Here, go ahead; you model her, too.' Then —then—he—he said——" Le Brux showed signs of choking. He controlled himself, and continued—"he said, 'I can't model anything, *Maître,* unless I feel it first.'"

"Létonne, I give you my word of honor that I kept my face. I not only kept my face, but I said to Cellette—she had n't so much as looked up from her book —I said to her, 'Cellette, this young sculptor would like to model you, but he says he must feel you first.' Cellette looked around at that. You know those gamine

eyes of hers that are always sure they 'll never see anything new in the world? But you don't. In years Cellette is very young—long after your time. Well, she turned those eyes around, looked the boy over, and said, 'Let the babe feel.' Then she went back to her book.

"I waved the boy to her, gravely, with a working of my fingers that was as plain as French. It said, 'The lady says you may feel.' The boy steps forward, and I pretend to go on with my work."

Le Brux stopped. "Excuse me, my friend," he said nervously. "Will you kindly send for another pail of water?"

Leighton glanced into the pail.

"There 's enough left," he said impatiently. "Go on."

"Ah, yes," sighed Le Brux, "go on. Just like that, go on. Well, your boy went on. He felt her head, her arms, her shoulders; you could see his fingers seeking things out. Cellette is a model born—and trained. She stood it wonderfully until he came to the muscles of her back. You know how we all like to have our backs scratched, just like dogs and cats? Well, I do n't suppose Cellette had ever happened on just that feeling before. It touched the cat chord. She began to gurgle and—and wriggle. 'Keep still, please,' says the boy, very grave and earnest. And a minute later, 'Keep still, will you?' Then he came to her ribs."

Le Brux's cheeks puffed out, and he showed other signs of distress, but he controlled himself.

"After that," he continued, "things happened more or less at one and the same time. Cellette giggled and squirmed. Then the boy got angry and cried, 'Will you keep still?' and grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her! Shook Cellette till her little head went zig-zag-zigzag. It took her the sixteenth part of a second to get to her feet, and when she slapped him I myself saw stars. At the same time I saw her face, and I yelled, 'Run, boy! Run!' For a second he stood paralyzed with wonder,—just long enough for her to get in another slap,—and then, just as she was curving her fingers, he—he ran. Her nails only took a strip out of his jacket! Oh! oh!"

"*Maître,*" cried Leighton, tears crawling down his cheeks, "do n't you dare stop! Go on! Go *on!* Finish now while you have the strength."

"Here they passed and there," groaned Le Brux, pointing at bits of ruin, "then I yelled, 'Boy, do n't go out of the door, whatever you do. She 'll follow sure, and we 'll never hear the last of it.' Then the thought came to me that he was the son of my friend. I lifted up the end of the throne. He shot under it. I let it down quickly. I sat upon it. I laughed—I——"

Le Brux stopped and stared. Leighton, his feet outstretched, his head thrown back, his arms hanging limp,

was laughing as he had never laughed before. As quick as a cat, Le Brux reached out for the pail and dashed its remaining contents in Leighton's face.

"I cannot bear an obligation," he said grimly as Leighton spluttered and choked. "Thou savedst my life; I save thine. How is it you say in English? 'One good turn deserves another!'"

"*Maître,*" said Leighton, drying his face and then his eyes, "where is the boy now? He 's—he 's not still under the throne?"

"I do n't know where he is," said Le Brux. "He 's not under the throne. I remember, vaguely, it is true, but I remember letting him out. That was this morning. Then I wired to you. Since then I have been laughing myself to death."

Leighton continued to wipe his eyes, but Le Brux had sobered down.

"Talk about my mighty impersonality before the nude?" he cried. "Impersonality! Bah! Mine? Let me tell you that for your boy the nude in the human form does n't *exist* any more than a nude snake, fish, dog, cat, or canary exists for you or me. He 's the most natural, practical, educated human being I ever came across, and there are several thousand mothers in France that would do well to send their *jeunes filles* to the school that turned him out. In other words, my friend,

your boy is so fresh that I have no mind to be the one to watch him wither or wake up or do any of the things that Paris leads to. I wired for you to take him away."

"We 'll have to find him first," said Leighton. "Let 's look in his room."

Together they walked down the hall. Leighton opened the door without knocking. He stood transfixed. Le Brux stared over his shoulder. Lewis, with his back to them, was working feverishly at the wet clay piled on a board laid across the backs of two chairs. On Lewis's little bed lay Cellette, front down, her chin in her hand, and reading a book.

"Holy name of ten thousand pigs!" murmured Le Brux.

Lewis turned.

"Why, Dad!" he cried, "I *am* glad to see you!"

Leighton's heart was in the grip he gave the boy's hand so frankly held out.

"*Maître,*" remarked Cellette from the bed, "believe me if you can: he is still a babe."

"A babe!" cried Le Brux, catching Lewis with finger and thumb and lifting him away from the board. "I should say he is. Here!" He caught up chunks of wet clay and hurled them at Lewis's dainty model of Cellette. He started molding with sweeps of his thumb. A gigantic, but graceful, leg began to take form. He

turned and caught Lewis again and shook him till his head rolled. "Big!" he roared, thumping his chest. "Make it big—like me!"

Leighton returned to London alone.

CHAPTER XXII

LEWIS'S life in Paris fell into unusual, but not unhappy, lines. It was true that when others were around, Le Brux treated him as though he were a scullion or at least a poor relative living on his bounty, for the great sculptor was in dread lest it be noised about that he had at last taken a pupil. But when they were alone, he made up for all his brutality by a certain tenderness which he was at great pains to dissemble. He had but one phrase of commendation, and it harped back and reminded them both of Leighton. When Le Brux was well pleased with Lewis, he would say, "My son, I shall yet create thee."

It could not be said that master and pupil lived together. Lewis had a room down the hall and the freedom of the great atelier, but he never ate with Le Brux and never accompanied him on his rare outings. From the very first day he had learned that he must fend for himself.

Curiosity in all that was new about him sustained the boy for a few days, but as the fear of getting lost restricted him to the immediate neighborhood of his abode,—a neighborhood where the sign "On parle an-

glais" never appeared in the shop windows, and where a restaurateur would not deign to speak English even if he knew it,—he gradually became a prey to the most terrible of all lonelinesses—the loneliness of an outsider in a vast, gay city.

At first he did not dare go into a restaurant. When hunger forced him, he would enter a *pâtisserie,* point at one thing and another, take without question the change that was handed him, and return to his room to eat. The neighborhood, however, was blessed with a series of second-hand book-shops. One day his eyes fell on an English-French phrase-book. He bought it. He learned the meaning of the cabalistic sign, "Table d'hôte. Dîner, 2f." He began to dine out.

In those lonely initiative weeks Lewis's mind sought out Nadir and dwelt on it. He counted the months he had been away, and was astounded by their number. Never had time seemed so long and so short. He longed to talk to Natalie, to tell her the dream that had seized upon him and gradually become real. At the little book-shop he bought ink, paper, and pen, and began to write.

It was an enormous letter, for one talked easily to Natalie, even on paper. At the end he begged her to write to him, to tell him all that had happened at Nadir, if, indeed, anything beyond her marriage had occurred to mark the passing months. What about the goats?

A whole string of questions about the goats followed, and then, again, was she really married? Was she happy?

The intricacies of getting that letter weighed, properly stamped, and posted were too much for Lewis. He sought aid not from Le Brux, but from Cellette. It took him a long time to explain what he wanted. Cellette stared at him. She seemed so stupid about it that Lewis felt like shaking her again, an impulse that, assisted by memory, he easily curbed.

"But," cried Cellette at last, "it is so easy—so simple! You go to the post, you say, 'Kindly weigh this letter,' you ask how much to put on it, you buy the stamps, you affix them, you drop the letter in the slot. *Voilà!*" She smiled and started off.

Lewis reached out one arm and barred her way.

"Yes, yes," he stammered, "*voilà*, of course." A vague recollection of his father taming Le Brux with a dinner came to his aid. He explained to Cellette that if she would post the letter for him, he would be pleased to take her to dinner.

Then Cellette understood in her own way.

"Ah," she cried brightly, "you make excuses to ask me to dine, eh? That is delicate. It is gallant. I am charmed. Let us go."

She hung on his arm. She chatted. She never waited for an answer. Together they went to the post. People

glanced at them and smiled, some nodded; but Cellette's face was upturned toward Lewis's. She saw no one else. It was his evening.

Gradually it dawned upon her that Lewis was really helpless and terribly alone. In that moment she took charge of him as a duck takes charge of an orphaned chick. On succeeding evenings she led him to the water, but she did not try to make him swim.

Parents still comfort themselves with the illusion that they can choose safe guardians for their young. As a matter of fact, guardians of innocence are allotted by Fate. When Fate is kind, she allots the extremes, a guardian who has never felt a sensation or one who has tired of all sensations. The latter adds wisdom to innocence, subtracts it from bliss, and—becomes an ideal.

Fate was kind to Lewis in handing him over to Cellette at the tragic age. Nature had shown him much; Cellette showed him the rest. She took him as a passenger through all the side-shows of life. She was tired of payments in flesh and blood. She found her recompense in teaching him how to talk, walk, eat, take pleasure in a penny ride on a river boat or on top of a bus, and in spending his entire allowance to their best joint profit.

In return Lewis received many a boon. He was no longer alone. He was introduced as an equal to the

haunts of the gay world of embryonic art—the only world that has ever solved the problem of being gay without money. From the first he was assumed to belong to Cellette. How much of the assault, the jeers, the buffoonery, the downright evil of initiation, he was saved by this assumption he never knew. Cellette knew, but her tongue was held by shame. All her training had taught her to be ashamed of "being good." If ever the secret of their astounding innocence had got out, professional pride would have forced her to ruin Lewis, body and soul, without a moment's hesitation.

Lewis also learned French—a French that rippled along mostly over shallows, but that had deep pools of art technic, and occasionally flew up and slapped you in the face with a fleck of well-aimed argot.

Weeks, months, passed before Leighton appeared on the scene, summoned by a scribbled note from Le Brux. When greetings were over, Leighton asked:

"Well, what is it this time? How is the boy getting along? Is he going to be a sculptor?"

"You are wise to ask all your questions at once," said Le Brux. "You know I shall talk just as I please. Your boy, just as you said he would, has attacked me in the heart. He is a most entertaining babe. I am no longer wet nurse. Somebody with the attributes has supplanted me—Cellette."

"H—m—m!" said Leighton.

Le Brux held up a ponderous hand.

"Not too fast," he said. "The lady assures me the babe is still on the bottle. Such being the case, I sent for you. They are inseparable. They have put off falling in love so long that, when they do, it will prove a catastrophe for one of them. Take him away for a while. Distort his concentrated point of view."

"That 's a good idea," said Leighton. "Perhaps I will."

"As for his work——" Le Brux stepped to the door and locked it. "I would n't have him catch us looking at it for anything." He lifted the damp cloth from Lewis's latest bit of modeling, two tense hands, long fingers curved like talons, thumbs bent in. They flashed to the eye the impression of terrific action.

Leighton gazed long at the hands.

"So," he said, "somewhere the boy has seen a murder."

"Ha!" cried Le Brux. "You see it? You see it? He has not troubled to put the throat within that grip, but it 's there. Ah, it 's there! I could see it. You see it. Presto! everybody will see it." He replaced the cloth.

"In a couple of years," he went on, "my work will be done. Let him show nothing, know nothing, till then."

CHAPTER XXIII

IF it 's a fine day to-morrow," said Leighton that evening to Lewis, "we 'll spend it in the country. Ever been in the country around here?"

Lewis shook his head.

"I don't believe Cellette knows anything about the country. It would be a great thing, Dad, if we could take her with us. She 's shown me around a lot. I 'd —I 'd like to."

Leighton suppressed a grimace.

"Why not?" he replied cheerfully.

The next day was fine and hot. Leighton decided to take a chance on innovation, and revisit a quiet stretch on the Marne. It was rather a journey to get there, but from the moment the three were settled in their third-class carriage time took to wing. As he listened to Lewis's and Cellette's chatter, the years rolled back for Leighton. He became suddenly young. Lewis felt it. For the second time he had the delightful sensation of stumbling across a brother in his father.

Cellette felt it, too. When they left the station and started down the cool, damp road to the river, she linked a hand in the arm of each of her laughing companions,

urged them to a run, and then picked up her little feet for mighty leaps of twenty yards at a time. *"Ah,"* she cried, *"c'est joli, d'être trois enfants!"*

How strange the earth smelt! She insisted on stopping and snuffling at every odor. New-mown grass; freshly turned loam; a stack of straw, packed too wet and left to ruin; dry leaves burning under the hot sun into a sort of dull incense—all had their message for her. Even of the country Cellette had a dim memory tucked away in her store of experience.

They came to the river. From a farmer they hired a boat. Cellette wanted to drift down with the stream, but Leighton shook his head. "No, my dear, a day on the river is like life: one should leave the quiet, lazy drifting till the end."

Leighton rowed, and then Lewis. They held Cellette's hands on the oars and she tried to row, but not for long. She said that by her faith it was harder than washing somebody else's clothes.

They chose the shade of a great beech for their picnic-ground. Cellette ordered them to one side, and started to unpack the lunch-basket that had come with Leighton from his hotel. As each item was revealed she cast a sidelong glance at Leighton.

"My old one," she said to him when all was properly laid out, "do not play at youth and innocence any longer. It takes an old sinner to order such a breakfast."

It was a gay meal and a good one, and, like all good meals, led to drowsiness. Cellette made a pillow of Lewis's coat and slept. The afternoon was very hot. Leighton finished his second cigar, and then tapped Lewis on the shoulder. They slipped beyond the screen of the low-limbed beech, stripped, and stole into the river.

At the first thoughtless splash Cellette sprang to her feet.

"Ah!" she cried, her eyes lighting, "you bathe, *hein?*" She started undoing her bodice.

Leighton stared at her from the water. "What do you do?" he cried in rapid French. "You cannot bathe. I won't allow it."

Cellette paused in sheer amazement that any one should think there was anything she could not do. Then deliberately she continued undoing hooks.

"Why can't I bathe?" she asked out of courtesy or merely because she knew the value of keeping up a conversation.

"You can't bathe," said Leighton, desperately, "because you are too tender, too delicate. These waters are—miasmic. They are full of snakes, too. It was just now that I stepped on one."

"Snakes, eh?" said Cellette, pausing again. "I do n't believe you. But—snakes!" She shuddered, and then

looked as though she were going to cry with disappointment.

"Don't you mind just this once, Cellette," cried Lewis, blowing like a walrus as he held his place against the current. "We'll come alone some time."

Cellette dried the perspiration from her short upper lip with a little cotton handkerchief.

"*Mon dieu,* but men are selfish!" she remarked.

Once they were in the boat again, drifting slowly down the shadowy river, she forgot her pet, turned suddenly gay, and began to sing songs that were as foreign to that still sunset scene as was Cellette herself to a dairy. Lewis had heard them before. He looked upon them merely as one of Cellette's moods, but they brought a twisted smile to Leighton's lips. He glanced at the pompous, indignant setting sun and winked. The sun did not wink back; he was surly.

In the train, Cellette, tired and happy, went to sleep. Her head fell on Leighton's shoulder. With dexterous fingers he took off her hat and laid it aside, then he looked at Lewis shrewdly. But Lewis showed no signs of jealousy. He merely laughed silently and whispered, "Is n't she a *funny?*"

They began to talk. Leighton told Lewis he was glad that he had worked steadily all these months, that Le Brux spoke well of his work, but thought a rest would help it and him.

"What do you say," he went on, "to a little trip all by ourselves again?"

"It would be splendid," said Lewis, eagerly. Then, after a pause: "It would be fun if we could take Cellette along, too. She 'd like it a lot, I know."

"Yes," said Leighton, dryly, "I do n't doubt she would." He seemed to ponder over the point. "No," he said finally, "it would n't do. What I propose is a man's trip—good stiff walking. We could strike off through Metz and Kaiserslautern, hit the Rhine valley somewhere about Dürkheim, pass through Mannheim with our eyes shut, and get to Heidelberg and the Neckar. Then we could float down the Rhine into Holland. That 's the toy-country of the world. Great place to make you smile."

Lewis's eyes watered.

"When—when shall we start?"

"We 'll start to start to-morrow," said Leighton. "We 've got to outfit, you know."

Two days later they were ready. Cellette kissed them both good-by. Leighton gave her a pretty trinket, a heavy gold locket on a chain. She glanced up sidewise at him through half-closed eyes.

"What 's this?" she asked in the tone of the woman who knows she must always pay.

"Just a little nothing from Lewis," said Leighton. "Something to remember him by."

"So," said Cellette, gravely. "I understand. He will not come back. It is well."

Leighton patted her shoulder.

"You are shrewd," he said. Then he added, with a smile: "Too shrewd. He will be back in two months."

A fiacre carried them beyond the fortifications. The cabman smiled at the generous drink-money Leighton gave him, spit on it, and then sat and watched father and son as they stepped lightly off up the broad highway. "Eh!" he called, choking down the curses with which he usually parted from his fares, "good luck! Follow the sun around the earth. It will bring you back."

Leighton half turned, and waved his arm. Then they settled down to the business of walking. They dropped into their place as a familiar part of the open road of only a very few years ago, for they were dressed in the orthodox style: knickerbockers; woolen stockings; heavy footwear; short jackets; packs, such as once the schoolboy used for books; and double-peaked caps.

Shades of a bygone day, where do you skulk? Have you been driven,

Up, up, the stony causeway to the mists above the glare,
Where the smell of browsing cattle drowns the petrol in the air?

CHAPTER XXIV

JUST before they left Paris a letter had come for Lewis—a big, official envelop, unstamped. He tore it open, full of curiosity and wonder. Out fell a fat inclosure. Lewis picked it up and stared. It is always a shock to see your own handwriting months after you have sent it off on a long journey. Here was his own handwriting on a very soiled envelop, plastered over with postmarks. How quaint was the superscription, how eloquent the distant dates of the postmarks! "For Natalie. At the Ranch of Dom Francisco, on the Road to Oeiras, in the Province of Ceara, Brazil."

The envelop had been cut open. Lewis took out the many sheets and searched them for a sign. None was there. He looked again at the envelop. Across it was stamped a notice of non-delivery on account of deficient address. Then his eyes fell on faint writing in pencil under a postmark. He recognized the halting handwriting of Dom Francisco's eldest girl. "She is gone," she had written. Nothing more.

"Gone?" questioned Lewis. "Gone where? Where could Natalie go?" He read parts of his letter over,

and blushed at his enthusiasms of almost a year ago. Almost a year! Leighton called him. He tore up the letter and threw it away. It was time to start. Then had come the good-by to Cellette, and after that the wonders of the road had held his mind in a constantly renewing grip. They still held it.

Leighton was beyond being a guide. He was a companion. When he could, he avoided big cities and monuments. He loved to stop for the night at wayside inns where the accommodations were meager, but ample opportunity was given for a friendly chat with the hostess cook. And if the inn was one of those homely evening meeting-places for old folks, he would say:

"Lew, no country wears its heart on its sleeve, but 'way inside. Let us live here a little while and feel the pulse of France."

When they crossed the border, he sat down under the first shade tree and made Lewis sit facing him.

"This," he said gravely, "is an eventful moment. You have just entered a strange country where cooks have been known to fry a steak and live. There are people that eat the steaks and live. It is a wonderful country. Their cooks are also generally ignorant of the axiomatic mission of a dripping-pan, as soggy fowls will prove to you. But what we lose in pleasing alimentation, we make up in scenery and food for thought. Collectively, this is the greatest people on earth; indi-

vidually, the smallest. Their national life is the most communal, the best regulated, the nearest socialistic of any in the world, and—they live it by the inch."

One afternoon, after a long climb through an odorous forest of red-stemmed pines, with green-black tops stretching for miles and miles in an unbroken canopy, they came out upon a broad view that entranced with its sense of illusion. Cities, like bunched cattle, dotted the vast plain. Space and the wide, unhindered sweep of the eye reduced their greatness to the dimensions of toy-land.

Leighton and Lewis stood long in silence, then they started down the road that clung to the steep incline. On the left it was overhung by the forest; on the right, earth fell suddenly away in a wooded precipice. As the highway clung to the mountain-side, so did quaint villages cling to the highway. They came to an old *Gasthaus,* the hinder end of which was buttressed over the brink of the valley.

Here they stopped. Their big, square room, the only guest-chamber of the little inn, hung in air high above the jumbled roofs of Dürkheim. To the right, the valley split to form a niche for a beetling, ruined castle. Far out on the plain the lights of Darmstadt and Mannheim began to blink. Beyond and above them Heidelberg signaled faintly from the opposing hills.

The room shared its aery with a broad, square

veranda, trellised and vine-covered. Here were tables and chairs, and here Leighton and Lewis dined. Before they had finished their meal, two groups had formed about separate tables. One was of old men, white-haired, white-bearded, each with his pipe and a long mug of beer. The other was of women. They, too, were old, white-haired. Their faces were not hard, like the men's, but filled with a withered motherliness. The men eyed the two foreigners distrustfully as though they hung like a cloud over the accustomed peace of that informal village gathering.

"All old, eh?" said Leighton to Lewis with a nod. "And sour. Want to see them wake up?"

"Yes," said Lewis.

The woman who served them was young by comparison with the rest. Leighton had discovered that she was an Alsatian, and had profited thereby in the ordering of his dinner. She was the daughter-in-law of the old couple that owned the inn. He turned to her and said in French, so that Lewis could understand:

"Smile but once, dear lady. You serve us as though we were Britishers."

The woman turned quickly.

"And are you not Britishers?"

"No," said Leighton; "Americans."

"So!" cried the woman, her face brightening. She turned to the two listening groups. "They are not Eng-

lish, after all," she called gaily. "They are Americans —Americans of New York!"

There was an instant change of the social atmosphere, a buzz of eager talk. The old men and the old women drew near. Then came shy, but eager, questions. Hans, Fritz, Anna were in New York. Could Leighton give any news of them? Each had his little pathetically confident cry for news of son or daughter, and Leighton's personal acquaintance, as an American, was taken to range from Toronto to Buenos Aires.

Leighton treated them like children; laughed at them, and then described gravely in simple words the distances of the New World, the size and the turmoil of its cities.

"Your children are young and strong," he added, noting their wistful eyes; "they can stand it. But you—you old folks—are much better off here."

"And yet," said an old woman, with longing in her pale eyes, "I have stood many things."

Leighton turned to Lewis.

"All old, eh?" he repeated. "Young ones all gone. Do you remember what I said about this being the best-regulated state on earth?"

Lewis nodded.

"Well," continued Leighton, "a perfectly regulated state is a fine thing, a great thing for humanity. It has only one fault: nobody wants to live in it."

Two days later they reached Heidelberg and, on the day following, climbed the mountain to the Königstuhl. They stood on the top of the tower and gazed on such a sight as Lewis had never seen. Here were no endless sands and thorn-trees, no lonely reaches, no tropic glare. All was river and wooded glade, harvest and harvesters, spires above knotted groups of houses, castle, and hovel. Here and there and everywhere, still spirals of smoke hung above the abodes of men. It was like a vision of peace and plenty from the Bible.

Lewis was surprised to find that his father was not looking at the scene. Leighton was bending over such a dial as no other spot on earth could boast. Its radiating spokes of varying lengths pointed to a hundred places, almost within the range of sight—names famous in song and story, in peace and in war. Leighton read them out, name after name. He glanced at Lewis's puzzled face.

"They mean nothing to you?" he asked.

Lewis shook his head.

"So you 're not quite educated, after all," said Leighton.

They descended almost at a run to the gardens behind the Schloss. As they reached them a long string of carriages drove up from the town. They were full of tourists, many of whom wore the enameled flag of the

United States in their buttonholes. Some of the women carried little red, white, and blue silk flags.

Lewis saw his father wince.

"Dad," he asked, "are they Americans?"

"Yes, boy," said Leighton. "Do you remember what I told you about the evanescent spirit in art?"

Lewis nodded.

"Well," said Leighton, "a beloved flag has an evanescent spirit, too. One should n't finger carelessly the image one would adore. That 's why I winced just now. Collectively, we Americans have never lowered the Stars and Stripes, but individually we do it pretty often." Then he threw up his head and smiled. "After all, there 's a bright side even to blatant patriotism. A nation can put up with every form of devotion so long as it gets it from all."

"But, Dad," said Lewis, "I thought all American women were beautiful."

"So they are," said Leighton, with a laugh. "When you stop believing that, you stop being an American. All American women are beautiful—some outside, and the rest inside."

"Why don't you take me to the States?" asked Lewis.

Leighton turned around.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty," said Lewis.

"I 'll take you," said Leighton, "when you are old

enough to see the States. It takes a certain amount of philosophy nowadays to understand your country—and mine. Of all the nations in the world, we Americans see ourselves least as others see us. We have a national vanity that keeps us from studying a looking-glass. That 's a paradox," said Leighton, smiling at Lewis's puzzled look. "A paradox," he continued, "is a verity the unpleasant truth of which is veiled."

"Anyway, I should like to go to the States," said Lewis.

"Just now," said Leighton, "our country is traveling the universal road of commercialism, but it 's traveling fast. When it gets to the end of the road, it will be an *interesting* country."

CHAPTER XXV

THREE years later, with the approval of Le Brux, Lewis exhibited the "Startled Woman." He did not name it. It named itself. There was no single remarkable trait in the handling of the life-size nude figure beyond its triumph as a whole—its sure impression of alarm.

Leighton came to Paris for his son's début. When he saw the statue, he said:

"It is not great. You are not old enough for that. But it will be a success, probably a sensation. What else have you done?"

All the modeling that Lewis had accumulated in the three years of his apprenticeship was passed in review. Leighton scarcely looked at the casts. He kept his eyes on Le Brux's face and measured his changing expression.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes," said Lewis.

"Well," said Leighton, "I suggest we destroy the lot. What do you say, Le Brux?"

Le Brux raised his bushy eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and threw out his hands.

"Eh," he grunted, "it is for the boy to say. Has he the courage? They are his offspring."

The two men stood and looked at Lewis. His eyes passed from them to his work and back again to Leighton's face.

"You are my father," he said.

"Come on," cried Leighton, without a moment's hesitation, "let us all join in the slaughter. Just remember, boy, that it 's no more cruel to kill your young than to sell them into slavery."

Three days later all of Paris that counts was talking of the "Startled Woman." The name of Leighton *fils* was in many mouths and in almost as many printed paragraphs.

"Leighton *fils!*" cried Lewis. Why *fils?*"

"Paris has a long memory for art, my boy," said Leighton. "Before I learned that I could never reach the heights, I raised a small monument on a foot-hill. They have n't forgotten it, these critics who never die."

Lewis was assailed by dealers. They offered him prices that seemed to him fabulous. But Leighton listened calmly and said, "Wait." The longer they waited, the higher climbed the rival dealers. At last came an official envelop. "Ah," said Leighton, before Lewis had opened it, "it has come."

It was an offer from the state. It was lower than the least of the dealers' bids. "That's the prize offer, boy," said Leighton. "Take it."

They went back to London together. Leighton helped Lewis search for a studio. They examined many places, pleasant and unpleasant. Finally Lewis settled on a great, bare, loft-like room within a few minutes' walk of the flat. "This will do," he said.

"Why?" asked Leighton.

"Space," said Lewis. "Le Brux taught me that. One must have space to see big."

While they were still busy fitting up the atelier a note came to Lewis from Lady Derl. She told him to come and see her at once, to bring all his clippings on the "Startled Woman," and a photograph that would do the lady more justice than had the newspaper prints.

When Lewis entered Lady Derl's room of light, it seemed to him that he had not been away from London for a day. The room was unchanged. Lady Derl was unchanged. She did not rise. She held out her hand, and Lewis raised her fingers to his lips.

"How well you do it, Lew!" she said. "Sit down."

He sat down and showed her a photograph of his work. She looked at it long. For an instant her worldliness dropped from her. She glanced shrewdly at Lewis's face. He met her eyes frankly. Then she tossed the picture aside.

"You are a nice boy," she said lightly. "I think I 'll give a little dinner for you. This time your dad won't object."

"I hope not," said Lewis, smiling. "I 'm bigger than he is now."

Both laughed, and then chatted until Leighton came in to join them at tea. Lady Derl told him of the dinner. He shrugged his shoulders and asked when it was to be.

"Don't look so bored," said Lady Derl. "I 'll get Old Ivory to come, if you 're coming. You two always create an atmosphere within an atmosphere where you can breathe the kind of air you like."

Leighton smiled.

"It 's a funny thing," he said. "When Ivory and I meet casually, we simply nod as though we 'd never shared each other's tents; but when we are both caught out in society, we fly together and hobnob like long-lost brothers. We 've made three trips together. Every one of 'em was planned at some ultra dinner incrusted with hothouse flowers and hothouse women."

"Thanks," said Lady Derl.

Lewis might have been bored by that first formal dinner if he had known the difference between women grown under glass and women grown in the open. But he did n't. With the exception of Ann Leighton, mammy, and Natalie, who were not women at all so

much as part and parcel of his own fiber, women were just women. He treated them all alike, and with a gallant nonchalance that astounded his two neighbors, Lady Blanche Trevoy and the Hon. Violet Materlin, accustomed as they were to find youths of his age stupidly callow or at best, in their innocence, mildly exciting. Leighton, seated at Hélène's left, watched Lewis curiously.

"They 've taken to him," said Hélène.

"Yes," said Leighton. "Nothing wins a woman of the world so quickly as the unexpected. The unexpected adds to the ancient lure of curiosity the touch of tartness that gives life to a jaded palate. Satiated women are the most grateful for such a fillip, and once a woman 's grateful, she 's generous. A generous man will give a beggar a copper, but a generous woman will give away all her coppers, and throw in herself for good measure."

"When you have to try to be clever, Glen, you 're a bore," remarked Hélène.

"I 'm not trying to be clever," said Leighton. "There 's a battle going on over there, and I was merely throwing light on it."

The battle was worth watching. The two young women were as dissimilar as beauty can be. Both had all the charms of well-nurtured and well-cared-for flesh. Splendid necks and shoulders, plenty of their own hair,

lovely contour of face, practice in the use of the lot, were theirs in common. But Vi was dark, still, and long of limb. Blanche was blonde, vivacious, and compact without being in the least heavy.

Vi spoke slowly. Even for an English woman she had a low voice. It was a voice of peculiar power. One always waited for it to finish. Vi knew its power. She tormented her opponents by drawling. Blanche also spoke softly, but at will she could make her words scratch like the sharp claws of a kitten.

"And how did you ever get the model to take that startled pose?" Blanche was asking Lewis.

"That 's where the luck came in," said Lewis, smiling; "and the luck is what keeps the work from being great."

"What do you mean?"

"Well," said Lewis, "Le Brux says that luck often leads to success, never to greatness."

"And how did luck come in?" drawled Vi.

Lewis smiled again.

"I 'll tell you," he said. "The model is an old pal of mine. One day we were bathing in the Marne,—at least I was bathing, and she was just going to,—when a farmer appeared on the scene and yelled at her. She was startled and turning to make a run for it when I shouted, 'Hold that pose, Cellette!' She 's a mighty

well-trained model. For a second she held the pose. That was enough. She remembered it ever after.

"Does it take a lot of training to be a model?" asked Blanche. "How would I do?" She turned her bare shoulders frankly to him.

Lewis glanced at her. "Yours is not a beauty that can be held in stone," he said. "You are too respectable for a bacchante, too vivacious for anything else." He turned to Vi. "You would do better," he said as though she too had asked.

Vi said nothing, but her large, dark eyes suddenly looked away and beyond the room. A flush rose slowly into her smooth, dusky cheek. Blanche bit her under lip.

"Vi has won out," said Hélène to Leighton.

CHAPTER XXVI

NATALIE and her mother were sitting on the west veranda of Consolation Cottage at the evening hour. Just within the open door of the dining-room mammy swayed to and fro in a vast rocking-chair that looked too big for her.

The years had not dealt kindly with the three. Years in the tropics never do deal kindly with women. Mammy had grown old and thin. Her clothes, frayed, but clean, hung loosely upon her. Her hair was turning gray. She wore steel-rimmed glasses. Mrs. Leighton's face, while it had not returned to the apathy of the years of sorrow at Nadir, was still deeply lined and of the color and texture of old parchment. The blue of her eyes had paled and paled until light seemed to have almost gone from them. To Natalie had come age with youth. She gave the impression of a freshly cut flower suddenly wilted by the sun.

In Mrs. Leighton's lap lay two letters. One had brought the news that Natalie had inherited from a Northern Leighton aunt an old property on a New England hillside. The other contained the third offer

from a development company that had long coveted the grounds about Consolation Cottage.

"It 's a great deal of money, dear," said Mrs. Leighton to Natalie. "What shall we do?"

For a moment Natalie did not reply, and when she spoke, it was not in answer. She said:

"Mother, where is Lew? I want him." Her low voice quivered with desire.

Mrs. Leighton put her fingers into Natalie's soft hair and drew the girl's head against her breast. A lump rose in her throat. She longed to murmur comfort, but she had long since lost the habit of words. What was life worth if she could not buy with it happiness for this her only remaining love?

"Darling," she whispered at last, "whatever you wish, whatever you say, we 'll do. Do you think—would you like to go back to—to Nadir—and look for Lewis?"

Natalie divined the sacrifice in those halting words. Her thin arms went up around Ann Leighton's neck. She pressed her face hard against her mother's shoulder. She wanted to cry, but could not. Without raising her face, she shook her head and said:

"No, no. I do n't want ever to go back to Nadir. Lew is not there. That night—that night after we buried father I went out on the hills and called for Lew. He did not answer. Suddenly I just knew he was n't there. I knew that he was far, far away."

Ann Leighton did not try to reason against instinct. She softly rocked Natalie to and fro, her pale eyes fixed on the setting sun. Gradually the sunset awoke in her mind a stabbing memory. Here on this bench she had sat, Natalie, a baby, in her lap, and in the shelter of her arms little Lewis and—and Shenton, her boy. By yonder rail she had stood with her unconscious boy in her arms, and day had suddenly ceased as though beyond the edge of the world somebody had put out the light forever. Her pale eyes grew luminous. The unaccustomed tears welled up in them and trickled down the cheeks that had known so long a drought. They rained on Natalie's head.

"Mother!" cried Natalie, looking up—"Mother!" Then she buried her face again in Ann's bosom, and together they sobbed out all the oppressing pain and grief of life's heavy moment. Not by strength alone, but also by frailty, do mothers hold the hearts of their children. Natalie, hearing and feeling her mother sob, passed beyond the bourn of generations and knew Ann and herself as one in an indivisible, quivering humanity.

Mammy's chair stopped rocking. She listened; then she got up and came out on the veranda. Her eyes fell upon mother and daughter huddled together in the dusk. She hovered over them. Her loose clothes made her seem ample, almost stolid.

"Wha' fo' you chilun's crying?" she demanded.

"We 're *not* crying," sobbed Natalie.

"Huh!" snorted mammy. "Yo' jes come along outen this night air, bof of yo', an' have yo' suppah. Come on along, Miss Ann. Come on along, yo' young Miss Natalie."

"Just a minute, mammy; in just a minute," gasped Natalie. "You go put supper on the table." Then she rose to her feet, and drew her mother up to her. "Kiss me," she said and smiled. She was suddenly strong again with the strength of youth.

Ann kissed her and she, too, almost smiled.

"Well, dear?" she said.

"We 're going away," said Natalie, holding protecting arms around her mother. "We 're going to sell this place, and then we 're just going away into another world. This one 's too rough for just women. We 'll go see that old house Aunt Jed left to me. I want to live just once in a house that has had more than one life."

Day after day the ship moved steadily northward on an even keel. Upon mammy, Natalie, and Mrs. Leighton a miracle began to descend. Years fell from their straightening shoulders. At the end of a week, Ann Leighton, kneeling alone in her cabin, began her nightly devotions with a pæan that sounded strangely in her

own ears: "Oh, Thou Who hast redeemed my life from destruction, crowned me with loving-kindness and tender mercies, Who hast satisfied my mouth with good things so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's!"

CHAPTER XXVII

AMONG Leighton's many pet theories was one that he called the axiom of the propitious moment. Any tyro at life could tell that a thing needed saying; skill came in knowing how to wait to say it. At Lady Derl's dinner Leighton had decided to go away for several months. He had something to say to Lewis before he went, but he passed nervous days waiting to say it. Then came the propitious moment. They were sitting alone over a cheerful small fire that played a sort of joyful accompaniment to the outdoor struggle of spring against the cold.

"In every society," said Leighton, breaking a long silence, "where women have been numerically predominant, the popular conception of morality has been lowered. Your historical limitations are such that you 'll have to take my say-so for the truth of that generality."

"Yes, sir," said Lewis.

"Man's greatest illusion in regard to woman," continued Leighton, "is that she 's fastidious. Men are fastidious and vulgar; women are neither fastidious nor vulgar. There 's a reason. Women have been too intimately connected through the ages with the slops of

life to be fastidious. That 's driven them to look upon natural things with natural eyes. They know that vulgarity is n't necessary, and they revolt from it. These are all generalities, of course."

"Yes, sir," said Lewis.

"Women are very wonderful. They are an unconscious incarnation of knowledge. Knowledge bears the same relation to the wise that liquor does to the man who decided the world would be better without alcohol and started to drink it all up. Man's premier temptation is to drink up women. Lots of men start to do it, but that 's as far as they get. One woman can absorb a dozen men; a dozen men can't absorb one woman. Women—any one woman—is without end. Am I boring you?"

"No, sir," said Lewis. "You are giving me a perspective."

"You 've struck the exact word. Since we met, I 've given you several of my seven lives, but there 's one life a man can't pass on to his son—his life with relation to women. He can only give, as you said, a perspective."

Leighton chose a cigar carefully and lit it.

"Formerly woman had but one mission," he went on. "She arrived at it when she arrived at womanhood. The fashionable age for marriage was fifteen. Civilization has pushed it along to twenty-five. Those ten cumulative years have put a terrific strain on woman.

On the whole, she has stood it remarkably well. But as modernity has reduced our animalism, it has increased our fundamental immorality and put a substantial blot on woman's mission as a mission. Woman has had to learn to dissemble charmingly, but in the bottom of her heart she has never believed that her mission is intrinsically shameful. That 's why every woman feels her special case of sinning is right—until she gets caught. Do you follow me?"

"I think so," said Lewis.

"Well, if you 've followed me, you begin to realize why a superfluity of women threatens conventional life. There are an awful lot of women in this town, Lew."

Leighton rose to his feet and started walking up and down, his hands clasped behind him, his head dropped.

"I have n't been feeding you on all these generalities just to kill time. A generality would be worth nothing if it were n't for its exceptions. Women are remarkable for the number of their exceptions. You are crossing a threshold into a peculiarly lax section and age of woman. I want you to believe and to remember that the world still breeds noble and innocent women."

Leighton stopped, threw up his head, and fixed Lewis with his eyes.

"Do you know what innocence is? Ask the average clergyman to describe innocence to you, and when he

gets through, think a bit, take off the tinsel words with which he has decked out his graven image, and you 'll find what? Ignorance enshrined. Every clergy the world has seen has enshrined ignorance, and ignorance has no single virtue that a sound turnip does not share."

Leighton stopped and faced his son.

"Now, my boy," he said, "here comes the end of the sermon. Beware of the second-best in women. Many a man trades his soul not for the whole world, but for a bed-fellow." He paused. "I believe," he continued, flushing, "I still believe that for every man there is an all-embracing woman to whom he is all-embracing. Thank God! I 'm childish enough to believe in her still, though I speak through soiled lips—the all-embracing woman who alone can hold you and that you alone can hold."

Lewis stared absently into the fire.

"'The worlds of women are seven,'" he repeated, half to himself: "'spirit, weed, flower, the blind, the visioned, libertine, and saint. None of these is for thee. For each child of love there is a woman that holds the seven worlds within a single breast. Hold fast to thy birthright, even though thou journey with thy back unto the light.'"

"What—where—what 's that?" stammered Leighton, staring at his son.

Lewis looked up and smiled.

"Only Old Immortality. Do you remember her? The old woman who told my fortune. She said that. D' you know, I think she must have been a discarded Gipsy. I never thought of it before. I did n't know then what a Gipsy was."

"Gipsy or saint, take it from me, she was, and probably is, a wise woman," said Leighton. "Somehow I 'm still sure she can never die. Do you remember all she said when she told you your fortune?"

"Yes," said Lewis; "I think I do. Every once in a while I 've said it over to myself."

"I wish you 'd write down what she said and—and leave it on my table for me. You 'll have to do it to-night, for I 'm off to-morrow. Old Ivory and I have shot so much game we 've grown squeamish about it, but it seems there 's a terrific drought and famine on in the game country of the East Coast, and all the reserves have been thrown open. The idea is meat for the natives and a thinning out of game in the overstocked country. We are going out this time not as murderers, but as philanthropists."

"I 'd like to go, too," said Lewis, his eyes lighting." "Won't you let me?"

"Not this trip, my boy," said Leighton. "I hate to refuse you anything, but do n't think I 'm robbing you. I 'm not. I merely do n't wish you to eat life too fast. Times will come when you 'll *need* to go away. Just

now you 've got things enough to hunt right here. One of them is art. You may think you 've arrived, but you have n't—not yet."

"I know I have n't," said Lewis.

Leighton nodded.

"Ever heard this sort of thing? 'Art is giving something for nothing. Art is the ensnaring of beauty in an invisible mesh. Art is the ideal of common things. Art is a mirage stolen from the heavens and trapped on a bit of canvas or on a sheet of paper or in a lump of clay.' And so on and so on."

Lewis smiled.

"As a matter of fact," continued Leighton, "those things are merely the progeny of art. Art itself is work, and its chief end is expression with repression. Remember that—with repression. Many an artist has missed greatness by mistaking license for originality and producing debauch. I do n't want you to do that. I want you to stay here by yourself for a while and work; not with your hands, necessarily, but with your mind. Get your perspective of life now. Most of the pathetic 'what-might-have-beens' in the lives of men and women are due to misplaced proportions that made them struggle greatly for little things."

Lewis looked up and nodded.

"Dad, you 've got a knack of saying things that are true in a way that makes them visible. When you talk,

you make me feel as though some one had drawn back the screen from the skylight."

Leighton shrugged his shoulders. For a long moment he was silent; then he said:

"A life like mine has no justification if it can't let in light, even though it be through stained glass."

Lewis caught a wistful look in his father's eyes. He felt a sudden surge of love such as had come to him long years before when he had first sounded the depths of his father's tenderness. "There 's no light in all the world like cathedral light, Dad," he said with a slight tremble in his voice, "and it shines through stained glass."

"Thanks, boy, thanks," said Leighton; then he smiled, and threw up his head. Lewis had learned to know well that gesture of dismissal to a mood.

"Just one more word," continued his father. "When you do get down to working with your hands, do n't forget repression. Classicism bears the relation to art that religion does to the world's progress. It 's a drag-anchor—a sound measure of safety—despised when seas are calm, but treasured against the hour of stress. Let 's go and eat."

Lewis rose and put his hand on his father's arm.

"I 'll not forget this talk, Dad," he said.

"I hope you won't, boy," said Leighton. "It 's harder for me to talk to you than you think. I 'm driven and held by the knowledge that there are only two ways in

which a father can lose his son. One is by talking too much, the other 's by not talking enough. The old trouble of the devil and the deep, blue sea; the frying-pan and the fire. Come, we 've been bandying the sublime; let 's get down to the level of stomachs and smile. The greatest thing about man is the range of his octaves."

CHAPTER XXVIII

FOR a week Lewis missed his father very much. Every time he came into the flat its emptiness struck him, robbed him of gaiety, and made him feel as though he walked in a dead man's shoes. He was very lonely.

"Nelton," he said one night, "I wish things could talk—these old chairs and the table and that big worn-out couch, for instance."

"Lucky thing they can't, sir," mumbled Nelton, holding the seam of the table-cloth in his teeth while he folded it.

"Why?" said Lewis. "Why should it be lucky they can't? Do n't you suppose if they had the power of talk, they 'd have the power of discretion as well, just as we have?"

"I do n't know about that, sir," said Nelton. "Things is servants just like us serving-men is. The more wooden a serving-man is in the matter of talk, the easier it is for 'im to get a plice. If you ask me, sir, I would s'y as chairs is wooden and walls stone an' brick for the comfort of their betters, an' that they 'ave n't any too much discretion as it is, let alone talking."

"Nelton," said Lewis, "I 've been waiting to ask you something. I wonder if you could tell me."

"Can't s'y in the dark," said Nelton.

"It 's this," said Lewis. "Everybody here—all dad's friends except Lady Derl—call him Grapes Leighton. Why? I 've started to ask him two or three times, but somehow something else seems to crop up in his mind, and he does n't give me a chance to finish."

Nelton's lowered eyes flashed a shrewd look at Lewis's face.

"The exercise of discretion ennobles the profession," he said, and stopped, a dazed, pleased look in his face at hearing his own rhyme. He laid the table-cloth down, took from his pocket the stub of a pencil, and wrote the words on his cuff. Then he picked up the cloth, laid it over his arm, and opened the door. As he went out he paused and said over his shoulder: "Master Lewis, it would hurt the governor's feelin's if you asked him or anybody else how he got the nime of Gripes."

Let a man but feel lonely, and his mind immediately harks along the back trail of the past. In his lonely week Lewis frequently found himself thinking back. It was only by thinking back that he could stay in the flat at all. Now for the first time he realized that he had been stepping through life with seven-league boots. The future could not possibly hold for him the tremen-

dous distances of his past. How far he had come since that first dim day at Consolation Cottage!

To every grown-up there is a dim day that marks the beginning of things, the first remembered day of childhood. Lewis could not fasten on any memory older than the memory of a rickety cab, a tall, gloomy man, and then a white-clad group on the steps of Consolation Cottage. Black mammy, motherly Mrs. Leighton, curly-headed Shenton, and little Natalie, with her 'wumpled' skirt, who had stood on tiptoe to put her lips to his, appeared before him now as part of the dawn of life.

As he looked back, he saw that the sun had risen hot on his day of life. It had struck down Shenton, blasted the Reverend Orme, withered Ann Leighton, and had turned plump little Natalie's body into a thin, wiry home for hope. Natalie had always demanded joy even of little things. Did she still demand it? Where was Natalie? Lewis asked himself the question and felt a twinge of self-reproach. Life had been so full for him that he had not stopped to think how empty it might be for Natalie, his friend.

How little he had done to trace her! Only the one letter. He decided to write again, this time to Dom Francisco. If only he could talk to Natalie, what long hours it would take to tell and to hear all! A faint flush of anticipation was rising to his cheeks when a rap on

the door startled him. Before he could look around Nelton announced, "A lady to see you, sir."

Lewis leaped to his feet and stepped forward. Had one of the miracles he had been taught to believe in come to pass? Had prayer been answered? The lady raised her arms and started to take off her veil. Then she turned her back to Lewis.

"Do untie it for me," she drawled in the slow voice of Lady Violet Manerlin.

Lewis felt his face fall, and was glad she had her back to him. He undid her veil with steady, leisurely fingers.

"This is awfully good of you," he said. "How did you know I was alone?"

"Telephoned Nelton, and told him not to say anything."

Vi took off her hat and jacket as well as her veil, and tossed the lot into a chair. Then she sat down in a corner of the big couch before the fire, doubled one foot under her, tapped the floor with the other, and yawned. Lewis offered her a cigarette, took one himself, and then shared a match with her.

"It 's good of you to take it so calmly," said Vi. "Are you one of the fools that must always have an explanation? I 'll give you one, if you like."

"Do n't bother," said Lewis, smiling. "You 've been bored—horribly bored. You looked out of the window,

and saw the green things in the park, and remembered that there was only one bit in your list of humanity as green and fresh as they, and you headed straight for it."

"Yes," drawled Vi, "like a cow making for the freshest tuft of grass in the pasture. Thanks; but I 'm almost sorry you told me why I came. That 's the disappointing thing to us women. When we think we 're doing something original, somebody with a brain comes along and reduces it to first elements, and we find we 've only been natural."

Lewis straddled a chair, folded his arms on the back of it, and looked Vi over with a professional eye. She was posed for a painter, not for a sculptor, but even so he found her worth looking at. A woman can't sit on one foot, tap the floor with the other, and lean back, without showing the lines of her body.

"Mere length," said Lewis, "is a great handicap to a woman, but add proportion to length, and you have the essentials of beauty. Short and pretty; long and beautiful. D' you get that? A short woman may be beautiful as a table decoration, but let her stand up or lie down and, presto! she 's just pretty."

Vi reached out one long arm toward the fire, and flicked off the ash from her cigarette. She tried to hide the tremor that Lewis's words brought to her limbs and the color that his frankly admiring eyes brought

to the pallor of her cheeks. She was a woman that quivered under admiration.

"Have you never—do n't you ever kiss women?" she asked, looking at him with slanted eyes.

Lewis shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I suppose so. That is—well, to tell you the truth, I do n't remember.'

For a second Vi stared at him; then she laughed, and he laughed with her.

"Oh! oh!" she cried, "I believe you 're telling the truth!"

They sat and talked. Nelton brought in tea; then they sat and talked some more. A distant bell boomed seven o'clock. Vi started, rose slowly to her feet, and stretched.

"Have you got your invitation for the Ruttle-Marter fancy-dress ball next week?" she asked, stifling a yawn.

"No," said Lewis; "do n't know 'em."

"That does n't matter," said Vi. "I 'll see that you get a card to-morrow. I 'd like you to come. Nobody is supposed to know it, but I 'm going to dance. Will you come?"

"Oh, yes," said Lewis, rising; "I 'll come. I 've been a bit lonely since dad went away." Then he smiled. "So I was wrong, after all."

"Wrong?" said Vi, staring at him, "When, how?"

"This is what you really came for—to ask me to see you dance," he said, laughing.

"Oh, was it?" said Vi. "I 'm always wondering why I do things. Well, I suppose I 'd better go, but I hate to. I 've been so comfy here. If you 'd only press me, I might stay for dinner."

Lewis shook his head.

"Better not."

"Why?"

"Well, you 're married, are n't you?"

"Yes," said Vi, grimly, her eyes narrowing.

"Well," said Lewis, "you 've heard dad talk. He says marriage is just an insurance policy to the mind of woman."

"Yes," said Vi, "and that the best place to keep it is away from the fire. Your dad's insight is simply weird. But if you think you 're going to start on life where he left off, let me tell you you 'll be chewing a worn-out cud."

Lewis laughed.

"You would be right if I were to live life over on his lines. But I won't. He does n't want me to. He never said so, but I just know."

Vi shrugged her shoulders.

"You have a lot of sense," she said. "There 's nothing women dislike more. Good-by." She held out her hand and stepped toward him. She seemed to misjudge

the distance and half lose her balance. The full length of her quivering body came up against Lewis. He felt her hot, sweet breath almost on his mouth. He flushed. His arms started up from his sides and then dropped again.

"Touch and go!" he gasped.

"Which?" drawled Vi, her mouth almost on his, her wide, gray eyes so near that he closed his to save himself from blindness.

"Better make it 'go,'" said Lewis, and grinned.

"You 've saved yourself," said Vi, with a laugh. "If you had n't grinned, I 'd have kissed you."

CHAPTER XXIX

LEWIS went to the Ruttle-Marter ball determined to be gay. He searched for Vi, but did not find her. By twelve o'clock he had to admit that he was more than bored, and said so to a neighbor.

"That 's impossible," said the neighbor, yawning. "Boredom is an ultimate. There 's nothing beyond it; consequently, you can't be more than bored."

"You 're wrong," said Lady Derl from behind them. "For a man there 's always something beyond boredom: there 's going home."

"Touché," cried Lewis and then suddenly straightened. While they had been chatting, the curtain of the improvised stage at one end of the ball-room had gone up. In the center of the stage stood a figure that Lewis would have recognized at once even if he had not been a participant in the secret.

The figure was that of a tall woman. Her dark hair —and there was plenty of it—was done in the Greek style. So were her clothes, if such filmy draperies could be justly termed clothes. They were caught up under her breasts, and hung in airy loops to a little below her knees. They were worn so skilfully that art did not

appear. They fluttered about her softly moving limbs, but never flew. The woman was apparently blindfolded —with chiffon. The foamy bandage proved an efficient mask. Chiffon and draperies were of that color known to connoisseurs as *cuisse de nymphe.*

A buzz of interested questioning swept over the company. Mrs. Ruttle-Marter, who had been quite abandoned for over an hour, suddenly found herself the center of a curious and eager group.

"Who is she?" "What is she?" "Where did you get her?"

The trembling hostess, flushed by the first successful moment in many dreary seasons, was almost too gulpy to speak. But words came at last.

"Really, my dear Duchess, I do n't know who she is. I do n't know where she comes from or what she is. I only know her price and the name of her dance. If I told the price, well, there would n't be any rush in this crowd to engage her." So early did power lead the long-suffering Mrs. Ruttle-Marter to lap at revenge!

"Well, tell us the name of her dance, anyway," said a tall, soldierly gray-head that was feeling something for the first time in twenty years. "Do hurry! She's going to begin."

"I can do that," said Mrs. Ruttle-Marter. "Her dance is called 'Love is blind.' "

"Love is blind," repeated Lewis to Lady Derl. "Let 's see what she makes of it."

People did not note just when the music began. They suddenly realized it. It was so with Vi's dance. So gradually did her body sway into motion that somebody who had been staring at her from the moment she appeared whispered, "Why, she 's dancing!" only when the first movement was nearing its close.

The music was doubly masked. It was masked behind the wings and behind the dance. It did not seem interwoven with movement, but appeared more as a soft background of sound to motion. So it remained through all the first part of the dance which followed unerringly all the traditions of Greek classicism, depending for expression entirely on swaying arms and body.

"Who would have thought it!" whispered Lewis. "To do something well at a range of two thousand years! That 's more than art; it 's genius."

"It 's not genius," whispered back Lady Derl; "it 's just body. What 's more, I think I recognize the body."

"Well," said Lewis, "what if you do? Play the game."

"So I 'm right, eh? Oh, I 'll play the game, and hate her less into the bargain."

So suddenly that it startled, came a crashing chord.

The dancer quivered from head to foot, became very still, as though she listened to a call, and then swirled into the rhythm of the music. The watchers caught their breath and held it. The new movement was alien to anything the marbled halls of Greece are supposed to have seen; yet it held a haunting reminder, as though classicism had suddenly given birth to youth.

The music swelled and mounted. So did the dance. Wave followed on ripple, sea on wave, and on the sea the foaming, far-flung billow. Limb after limb, the whole supple body of the blind dancer came into play; yet there was no visible tension. Never dead, never hard, but limp,—as limp as flowing, rushing water,—she whirled and swayed through all the emotions until, at the highest pitch of the mounting music, she fell prone, riven by a single, throbbing sob. Down came the curtain. The music faded away in a long, descending sweep.

Men shouted hoarsely, unaware of what they were crying out, and women for once clapped to make a noise, and split their gloves. A youth, his hair disordered and a hectic flush in his cheeks, rushed straight for the stage, crying, "Who is she?"

Lewis stuck out his foot and tripped him. Great was his fall, and the commotion thereof switched the emotions of the throng back to sanity. Conventional, dogged clapping and shouts of *"Bis! Bis!"* were relied

on to bring the curtain up again, and relied on in vain. Once more Mrs. Ruttle-Marter was surrounded and beseeched to use her best efforts. As she acceded, a servant handed Lewis a scribbled note. "Come and take me out of this. Vi," he read. He slipped out behind the servant.

In the cab they were silent for a long time. Lewis's eyes kept wandering over Vi, conventional once more, and lazing in her corner.

"Well," she drawled at last, "what did you think of it?"

"Think of it?" said Lewis. "There were three times when I wanted to shout, 'Hold that pose!' After that—well, after that my brain stopped working."

"Do you mean it?" asked Vi.

"Mean what?"

"About wanting me to hold a pose."

"Yes," said Lewis; "of course. What of it?"

"What of it? Why, I will. When?"

"Do *you* mean it?" asked Lewis.

Vi nodded.

"Name your own time."

"To-morrow," said Vi, "at ten."

The following morning Lewis was up early, putting his great, bare studio in fitting order, and trying to amplify and secure the screened-in corner which pre-

vious models had frequently damned as a purely tentative dressing-room. Promptly at ten Vi appeared.

"Where 's your maid?" asked Lewis. "You 've simply got to have a maid along for this sort of thing."

"You 're wrong," said Vi. "It 's just the sort of thing one does n't have a maid for. It 's easier to trust two to keep quiet than to keep a maid from vain imaginings. And—it 's a lot less expensive."

"Well," said Lewis, "where 's your costume?"

"Here," said Vi, "in my recticule."

They laughed. Ten minutes later Vi appeared in her filmy costume. Lewis's face no longer smiled. He was sitting on a bench at the farther end of the room, solemnly smoking a pipe. He did not seem to notice that Vi's whole body was suffused, nervous.

"Dance," said Lewis.

Vi hesitated a moment and then danced, at first a little stiffly. But her mind gradually concentrated on her movements; she began to catch the impersonal working atmosphere of a model.

"Hold that!" cried Lewis, and, a second later: "No, that will never do. You 've stiffened. Try again."

Over and over Vi tried to catch the pose and keep it until, without a word, she crossed the room, threw herself on a couch, and began to cry from pure exhaustion. When she had partly recovered, she suddenly awoke to the fact that Lewis had not come to comfort

her. She looked up. Lewis was still sitting on the bench. He was filling a fresh pipe.

"Blown over?" he asked casually. "Come on. At it again."

At the end of another half-hour Vi gave up the struggle. She had caught the pose twice, but she had been unable to hold it.

"I give it up," she wailed. "I 'll simply never be able to *stay* that way."

"If you were a professional dancer," said Lewis, "I 'd say 'nonsense' to that. But you 're not. I 'm afraid it would take you weeks, perhaps months, to get the stamina. Take it easy now while I make some tea."

"Tea in the morning!" said Vi. "I can't stand it. I 'd rather have a glass of port or something like that."

"I 've no doubt you would, but you 're not going to get it," said Lewis, calmly, as he went about the business of brewing tea.

Vi finished her first cup, and asked for a second.

"It 's quite a bracer, after all," she said. "I feel a lot better." She rose and went to the model's throne at one side of the room. "Is this where they stand?" she asked.

Lewis nodded.

Vi climbed the throne, and took a pose. Her face was turned from Lewis, her right arm half outstretched, her left at her side. She was in the act of stepping.

Her long left thigh was salient, yet withdrawing. It was the pose of one who leads the way.

"This is the pose you will do me in," she said.

For a moment Lewis was silent, then he said gravely:

"No, you do n't really want me to do you that way."

"I do, and you will," said Vi, without looking around.

For another long moment Lewis was silent.

"All right," he said at last. "Come down. Dress yourself. You 've had enough for to-day."

CHAPTER XXX

WEEKS passed. Lewis worked steadily at his figure of Vi. From the time the wires had been set and the rough clay slapped on them, he had never allowed her to see the figure.

"It 's no use asking," he said. "You 're no master at this art. The workman who shows unfinished stuff to anybody but a master is a fool."

"Well, when, then?" asked Vi, impatiently, after weeks had lengthened to months.

"Almost any day now," said Lewis; but before 'any day' came around, something happened that materially delayed the satisfaction of Vi's curiosity.

Lady Derl had frequently drafted Lewis into dinners that she thought would be stupid for her without him. As a result, the inevitable in London happened. It became a habit to invite Lewis when Lady Derl was coming. He never took her in,—her rank and position made that impossible,—but he was there, somewhere at the lower end of the table, where she could watch him when she felt bored and occasionally read in the astonished faces of his neighbors the devastation he had caused by some remark; for Lewis, like his

father, had a way of saying things. The difference was that Leighton's *mots* were natural and malicious, while Lewis's were only natural. On the whole, Lewis created the greater sensation.

The night after Lewis had said "Almost any day now" to Vi, he found himself at a semi-diplomatic dinner next to a young person who, like himself, seemed to find the affair a bit heavy.

"What did they invite you for?" asked Lewis.

"They could n't help it," replied the young person, stifling a yawn. "I 'm the wife of the chargé of the Brazilian legation. And you?"

"Oh, I 'm here just to take Lady Derl home."

The young person's eyes showed a gleam of interest as they glanced up the table to where Lady Derl sat and reigned an easy queen in that assembly.

"Oh," she said, "are you? Why you?"

"Well," said Lewis, "I suppose it 's because I 'm the only man in town that always remembers Lady Derl's beauty and gray hair at the same time."

The young person smiled.

"I believe I 've heard of you. Leighton is your name, is n't it?"

"It 's only five minutes since I was introduced," said Lewis, smiling, "and you made me say it over three times."

"Ah, yes," said the lady, unperturbed, "but five

minutes is a long time—sometimes. Is Leighton a common name?"

"Not as common as some," said Lewis. "Why?"

"Nothing, only I know some Leightons in Brazil."

Lady Derl saw Lewis start, and quickly lay down his fork. She watched in vain through the rest of that dinner for a conversational sensation at his end of the table. When they were in the carriage and on the way home she asked:

"Well, what was it?"

"What was what?" said Lewis, out of a reverie.

"What did that Senhora What's-her-name have to tell you that made you forget to eat?"

"She was telling me about an old pal of mine," said Lewis. "Did dad ever tell you where he found me?"

"Yes," said Lady Derl; "he said he found you in the geometrical center of nowhere, surrounded by equal parts of wilderness."

"That 's what he thought," said Lewis; "but there was a home tucked into the wilderness. It had been my home for a great many years. People had been kind to me there—Mrs. Leighton; Natalie, my pal; an old darky named just mammy; and, in a way, the Reverend Orme. After I 'd been away a year, I wrote back. They had gone. I 've just found out where they are, all but the Reverend Orme. I reckon he must be dead."

"And you 're going to write?"

"Write?" said Lewis. "No, I 'm not going to write. I 'm just going." For a moment they were silent, then he said, "There 's something about hearing of people what were kind to you that makes you feel awfully lonely."

Lady Derl reached out and took his hand. Their hands lay together on his knee. The drive came to an end, and they had said nothing more. As they stood under the light of the outer hall Hélène turned to Lewis.

"When are you going?"

"To-morrow."

She held up her lips to him.

"Kiss me good-by, Boy."

He kissed her, and for a moment gripped her wrists.

"Hélène," he said, "you 've been awfully good to me, too. I—I do n't forget."

"You do n't forget," repeated Lady Derl. "That 's why I kissed you. Don't be hard on your little pal when you find her. Remember, you 've gone a long way alone."

As Lewis strode away rapidly toward the flat, the fragrance of Hélène clung to him. It clung to him so long that he forgot Vi—forgot even to leave a note for her explaining his sudden departure. When he reached Santos, three weeks later, it did n't seem worth while to cable.

As Lewis stepped out of the station at San Paulo,

he felt himself in a dream. He crossed the street into the public gardens and looked back. He had never seen a station like that. It was beautiful. It had the spirit of a cathedral raised by some pagan as a shrine to the commercial age. Had the railroad bred a dreamer?

Several motor-cars for hire lined the curb. Lewis stepped up to one of the drivers.

"How did they come to build that?" he asked in Portuguese, with a nod toward the station.

The driver shrugged his shoulders.

"Too much money," he said. "The charter limits them to twenty-five per cent. profits. They had such a surplus, they told the architect he could go as high as he liked. He went pretty high." The driver winked at his own joke, but did not smile.

"I want you by the hour," said Lewis. "Do you know Mrs. Leighton's house—Street of the Consolation?"

The driver shook his head.

"There 's no such house," he said.

"Well, you know the Street of the Consolation? Drive there. Drive slowly."

On the way Lewis stared, unbelieving, at the things he saw. Gone were the low, thick-walled buildings that memory had prepared him for; gone the funny little street-cars drawn by galloping, jack-rabbit mules. In their stead were high, imposing fronts, with shallow doorways and heavy American electric trams.

The car shot out upon a mighty viaduct. Lewis leaned out and looked down. Here was something that he could remember—the valley that split the city in two, and up and down the sides of which he had often toiled as a boy. Suddenly they were across, and a monster building blotted all else from his sight. He looked up at the massive pile. "What is it?" he asked.

"Theater built by the state," answered the driver, without looking around. "Cost millions."

"Reis?" asked Lewis, smiling.

"Reis? Bah!" grunted the driver. "Pounds."

The street left the level and started to climb. Lewis looked anxiously to right and left. He saw a placard that read, "Street of the Consolation."

"Stop!" he cried.

The driver drew up at the curb.

"What 's the matter?" he asked.

"This is n't the Street of the Consolation," said Lewis, dismayed. "Where 's the big cotton-tree and the priest's house, and—and the bamboos? Where are the bamboos?"

The driver looked around curiously.

"I remember them, the bamboos," he said, nodding. "They 're gone."

"Wait here," said Lewis.

He stepped out of the car and started to walk slowly up the hill. He felt a strange sinking of the heart.

In his day there had been no sidewalk, only a clay path, beaten hard by the feet of three children on their way to school. In his day the blank row of houses had been a mud *taipa* wall, broken just here by the little gate of the priest's house. In his day there had been that long, high-plumed bank of bamboos, forever swaying and creaking, behind the screen of which had lain the wonder realm of childhood.

He came to the spot where the gate to Consolation Cottage had been. The old wooden gate and the two friendly, square brick pillars on which it had swung were gone; but in their stead rose a wondrous structure of scrolled wrought iron between two splendid granite shafts.

Lewis stood on tiptoe and gazed through the gate, up the driveway, to where Consolation Cottage had once stood. Through the tepid haze of a beautiful tropical garden he saw a high villa. It did not look back at him. It seemed to be watching steadily from its hill-top the spread of the mighty city in the valley below.

Lewis was brought to himself with a start. Somebody behind him cried out, "O-lá!" He turned to find two impatient horses almost on top of him. A footman was springing from his place beside the coachman to open the gate.

Lewis stepped aside. In the smart victoria sat a lady alone. She was dressed in white, and wore a great, black

picture-hat. Lewis glanced at her face. He recognized the Anglo-Saxon pallor. Out of the dead-white shone two dark eyes, unnaturally bright. He raised his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he began in English.

The gate had swung open. The horses were plunging on the taut reins. The lady drew her skirts in at her side and nodded. Lewis stepped into the carriage. The horses shot forward and up the drive.

CHAPTER XXXI

"IT was the only way," said the lady as Lewis handed her out of the carriage. "The horses would n't wait, once the gates were open. What did you wish to say?"

"I—I wanted to ask you about the Leightons," stammered Lewis. "They used to live here. That is——"

"I know," said the lady. "Come up on the veranda."

That veranda made Consolation Cottage seem farther away than ever to Lewis. Its floor was tiled. Its roof was cleverly arranged to give a pergola effect. It was quite vine-covered. The vines hid the glass that made it rain-proof. In one corner rugs were placed, wicker chairs, a swinging book-rack, and a tea-table. The lady motioned to Lewis to sit down. She sat down herself and started drawing off her long gloves. She looked curiously at Lewis's face.

"You 're a Leighton yourself, are n't you? Some relative to Mrs. Leighton and Natalie?"

Lewis nodded.

"A cousin in some Scotch degree to Natalie," he said; "I do n't know just what." Then he turned his eyes frankly on her.

"Where are they—Mrs. Leighton and—and Natalie?"

"They are gone," said the lady. "They sold out here almost a year ago and went back to the States. I have the address somewhere. I 'll get it for you." She went, but was back in a moment.

"Thanks," said Lewis. He did not look at her any more or around him. His eyes fixed vaguely on distance, as one's eyes do when the mind tells them they are not wanted.

The lady sat perfectly still and silent. The silence grew and grew until by its own weight it suddenly brought Lewis back to the present and confusion. He colored. His lips were opening in apology when the lady spoke.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

Lewis gave her a grateful look.

"I 've been playing about the old place," he said, smiling. "Not alone. Natalie, Shenton, and I. We 've been racing through the pineapple-patch, lying on our backs under an orange-tree, visiting the stables, and —and Manoel's little house, hiding in the bramble-patch, and peeking over the priest's wall." Lewis waved his hand at the scene that made his words so incongruous. "Sounds to you like rank nonsense, I suppose."

The lady shook her head.

"No," she said—"no, it does n't sound like nonsense."

Then he asked her about Natalie. She told him many little things. At the end she said:

"I feel that I 've told you nothing. Natalie is one of those persons that we generally call a 'queer girl' because we have n't the intelligence or the expression to define them. Our local wit said that she was a girl whom every man considered himself good enough for, but that considered herself too good for any man. That was unjust, but it sounded true because sooner or later all the eligibles lined up before Natalie—and in vain." The lady frowned. "But she was n't selfish or hard. She used to let them hang on till they just dropped off. She was one of those women that nothing surprises. Her train was made up of the ugly and the handsome—bore, prude, wit, and libertine. She gave them all something; you could feel it. I think she got tired of giving and never taking."

"Is she so beautiful?" asked Lewis.

"Beautiful? Oh, no," said the lady, and then suddenly stopped and straightened. She laughed. "Now I look back on it all, it seems she must be beautiful, but—but I know she is n't. Now *I 'm* talking nonsense."

"No, you 're not," said Lewis. "There are women like that." He reached out for his hat and stick.

"You 're not going?" said the lady. "You 'll stay to tea?"

Lewis shook his head.

"You 've been very kind," he said, "but I must be going."

Without rising, she took the hand that he held out and then sat and watched his erect figure swing down the drive to the gate. Suddenly she remembered him. They had been together in school. She did not call him back. Bores are people that misjudge the values of impressions. The lady was not a bore; she was a wise woman.

By traveling overland to Rio, Lewis caught the newest and finest of the big steam-packets plying between Buenos Aires and Southampton. This old world of his had been moving apace in more ways than one. The years since, with his father, he had made this same trip were comparatively few, but during them progress had more than taken a long stride; it had crossed a line.

He dressed for dinner at eight. As he stepped into the dining-room, he paused and stared. It was like walking into some smart London restaurant after the theater. Gone were the long ship-boards at which for generations human beings had been lined up like cattle at a trough. In their place were scattered small tables,

round and square, of a capacity varying from two to eight.

Around the tables wealth rioted. There were wealthy coffee-planters, who spent a yearly fortune on their annual trip to Paris, surrounded by their wives and such of their offspring as were old enough to escape the nursery table; planters, sheep- and cattle-men from the Argentine, some of them married, all accompanied; and women. Lewis had never before seen so many beautiful women at one time. It was *the* boat of the season. Over all hung an atmosphere of vintage wines.

Lewis was shown to a seat at a table for two. His *vis-à-vis* was a rare, lonely little man. The black studs in his shirt seemed to explain him. He was sour and morose till he found Lewis could speak French, then he bubbled over with information. It transpired that the room was alive with situations.

"This is a crowded boat, but see the lady over there?"

Lewis's eyes followed the speaker's backward nod. He saw a remarkably beautiful blonde in evening dress sitting alone at a table for four. She kept her eyes steadily on her plate.

"We call her the Duchess," continued the little man. "She belongs to De la Valla, the sugar king. He 's got his daughters with him, so she had to sit at another table, and he paid four passages for her so she 'd be kept alone."

Lewis nodded politely.

"Now slant your eyes over my left shoulder," continued the little man.

To Lewis's surprise, he saw another beautiful woman, a bright-eyed brunette, sitting alone at a table for four. He turned, interested, to his table companion for the explanation.

"Ah-ha!" said the little man, "you begin to wake up. Thát, my friend, is Mlle. Folly Delaires. She 's been playing in Buenos Aires. When she saw people staring at the Duchess, she stepped up to the purser's office and laid down the cash for a table for four. At first we thought it was just vanity and a challenge, but we know her better now. She 's just the devil of mischief and several other things in the flesh. We ought all to be grateful for her."

Lewis looked curiously at Mlle. Delaires. He watched to see her get up. She passed close to him. She did not have the height that his training had taught him was essential to beauty, but she had certain attributes that made one suddenly class height with other bloodless statistics. From her crown of brown hair to her tiny slippers she was alive. Vitality did not radiate from her, but it seemed to lurk, like a constant, in her whole body and in her every supple movement. Lewis did not see it, but she was of the type that forever takes and never gives.

As she passed close by him he felt an utterly new sensation, as though he were standing in a garden of narcotics, and lassitude were stealing through his limbs. When she had gone, a single memory clung to him—the memory of the wonderful texture of her skin. He had read in a child's book of physiology that our skin breathes. The affirmation had meant nothing to him beyond mechanics; now, suddenly, it meant much. He had seen, felt, this woman's skin breathe, and its breath had been like the fragrance of a flower.

For the first time in his life Lewis looked on woman with blind eyes. During almost three weeks the years that he had lived in familiar contact with women stood him in good stead. He never spoke to the bright-eyed rival to the Duchess, but he watched her from afar. Men swarmed about her. She stood them as long as they amused her, and then would suddenly shake them all off. There were days when she would let no one come near her. There was no day when any man could say he had been favored above another.

Then came an evening when Lewis had dressed unusually early and slipped up to the boat-deck to cool off before dinner. He sat down on a bench and half closed his eyes. When he opened them again he saw a woman—the woman, Folly Delaires—standing with her back to him at the rail. He had not heard or seen her come. Almost without volition he arose and stepped

to the rail. He leaned on it beside her. She did not move away.

"I want to kiss you," said Lewis, and trembled as he heard his own words.

The woman did not start. She turned her face slowly toward his.

"And I want you to," she said.

CHAPTER XXXII

WITHIN two weeks of Lewis's departure for South America, Leighton returned from his shooting-trip. Despite the fact that he had not written telling Lewis he was coming, he felt a great chagrin at finding the flat deserted except for the ever-faithful Nelton.

"Where 's the boy?" was Leighton's first question. Even as he stepped across the threshold he felt that he stepped into an empty house.

"South America," said Nelton, relieving his master of hat, stick, and gloves.

"South America!" cried Leighton, dismayed, and then smiled. "Well, he 's getting his dad's tricks early. What for?"

"Do n't know, sir. Mr. Lewis said as you 'd get it from her ladyship."

Lady Derl was out of town. Leighton followed her, stayed two days, decided her momentary entourage was not to his taste, and returned to London. He reached the flat in the afternoon, just in time to receive a caller. The caller was Vi.

"Hallo!" said Leighton as Nelton showed her in, "this is fortune. Take off your things and stay."

"I will—some of them," drawled Vi; "but not just yet." She sat down.

"What on earth are you doing in town?" asked Leighton.

"Well," said Vi, "up to three weeks ago I was here at the beck and call of your son. Then he suddenly took French leave." She turned and faced Leighton. "Where has he gone? It is n't like one of you to be rude in little things."

"I do n't think Lew meant to be rude," said Leighton. "He 's gone to South America. He heard about some cousins he 'd lost track of, and he just bolted the next morning."

"Cousins!" said Vi. "I did n't know any one still went in for family ties to the extent of South America, short of a fat death."

"No," said Leighton, smiling; there 's no money in this trip. Why were you at his beck and call?"

"Model," said Vi, coolly. "He 's been doing me."

"Doing *you!*" said Leighton, looking at her curiously.

"There, there," said Vi, "do n't let your imagination run away with you. Not in the nude. By the way, can you let me have the key? I left something in the studio, and I did n't like to go to Nelton."

"Certainly," said Leighton. "I 'll walk by there with you."

Vi gave a shrug of protest, but Leighton's back was already turned. He fetched the key, and together they walked over to Lewis's atelier. When they had climbed the stairs and were at the door, Vi said a little breathlessly and without a drawl:

"Do you mind very much not coming in? I won't be but a minute."

Leighton glanced at her, surprised. "Not at all," he said, and handed her the key. He took out a cigarette and lit it as she opened the door and closed it behind her. He started pacing up and down the bare hall. Presently he grew impatient, and glanced at his watch; then he stopped short in his tracks. From behind the closed door came unmistakably the sound of a woman sobbing.

Leighton did not hesitate. He threw open the door and walked in. Except for Vi, curled up in a little heap on the couch, the atelier was very still, vast, somber. In its center shone a patch of light. In the patch of light, on a low working pedestal, stood a statue. On the floor were a tumbled cloth and a fallen screen. Leighton stood stock-still and stared.

The sculptured figure was that of a woman veiled in draperies that were merely suggested. Her face, from where Leighton stood, was turned away. Her right arm

was half outstretched, her left hung at her side, but it was peculiarly turned, as though to draw the watcher on. Then there was the left thigh. Once the eye fell on that, all else was forgotten. Into this sinking sweep had gone all the artist's terrific force of expression and suggestion. No live man would have thought of the figure as "Woman Leading the Way," once his eyes had fallen on that thigh. To such a one the statue named itself with a single flash to the brain, and the name it spoke was "Invitation."

Leighton's first impulse was one of unbounded admiration—the admiration we give to unbounded power. Then realization and a frown began to come slowly to his face. Vi, crumpled up on the couch, and sobbing hard, dry sobs,—the sobs that bring age,—helped him to realization. Lewis, his boy, had done a base thing.

Without moving, Leighton glanced about the room till his eyes fell on the mallet. Then he stepped quickly to it, picked it up, and crossed to the statue. Beneath his quick blows the brittle clay fell from the skeleton wires in great, jagged chunks. With his foot he crushed a few of them to powder. He tossed the mallet aside, and glanced at Vi. She was still crying, but she had half risen at the sound of his blows, and was staring at him through wet eyes.

Leighton started walking up and down, the frown

still on his brow. Finally he came to a stop before the couch.

"Vi," he said—"Vi, listen! You must tell me something. It is n't a fair question, but never mind that."

She lifted a tear-stained face.

"Vi," said Leighton, tensely, "did he follow?"

Vi raised herself on her arms and stared at him for a moment before she gasped:

"You fool, do you suppose I would have cared if he had followed?" Then shame gripped her, and she threw herself full-length again, face down. Her shoulders shook, but she made no sound.

Leighton waited half an hour. He spent the time walking up and down and smoking cigarettes. He was no longer frowning. At the end of the half-hour he caught Vi by the arms and lifted her to her feet.

"Come on," he said.

Vi stared at him as one half-awakened.

"I do n't want to go anywhere," she said. "I 'm very well here."

"Nonsense!" said Leighton, "you don't realize what you 're doing to yourself. On my word, you look positively puttyish."

"Puttyish!" cried Vi, a flush of anger rising to her face. "Grapes, you 're brutal! Since when have you learned to trample on a woman?"

"That 's better," said Leighton, coolly. "I thought it would rouse you a bit."

Vi almost smiled at herself. She laid her hand on Leighton's arm and turned him toward the door.

"And they still say that no man knows women," she said. She paused and looked back at the fragments of the statue. Her lips twisted. "Even boys," she added, "pick out our naked souls and slap them in our faces."

As they walked slowly toward the flat, Vi said:

"I know why you had to ask that question. I 'm glad you did. You were misjudging Lew. But you can be sure of one thing: no one but us three ever saw that statue; I know now that no one but just Lew and myself were ever meant to see it. He did n't want to model me that way. When I asked for it, he hesitated, then suddenly he gave in." She paused for a moment, then she added, "I believe it 's part of a man's job to know when to trample on women."

CHAPTER XXXIII

IT was night at the flat. There was just chill enough in the air to justify a cozy little fire. Through the open windows came the low hum of London, subdued by walls and distance to the pitch of a friendly accompaniment to talk. In two great leathern chairs, half facing each other, Vi and Leighton sat down, the fire between them.

They had been silent for a long time. Vi had been twisting her fingers, staring at them. Her lips were half open and mobile. She was even flushed. Suddenly she locked her hands and leaned forward.

"Grapes," she said without a drawl, "I have seen myself. It is terrible. Nothing is left."

Leighton rose and stepped into his den. He came back slowly with two pictures in his hands.

"Look at these," he said. "If you were ten years older, you 'd only have to glance at them, and they 'd open a door to memory."

Vi gazed at the pictures, small paintings of two famous Spanish dancers. One was beautiful, languorous, carnal; the other was neither languorous nor carnal despite her wonderful body, and she was certainly not

beautiful. Vi laid the second picture down and held the first. Then almost unconsciously she reached out her hand for the discarded picture. Gradually the face that was not beautiful drew her until attention grew into absorption. The portrait of the languorous beauty fell to her lap and then slipped to the floor, face down. Leighton laughed.

Vi glanced up.

"Why?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing," said Leighton, "except that the effect those pictures had on you is an exact parallel to the way the two originals influenced men. For that——" Leighton waved a hand at the picture on the floor—"men gave all they possessed in the way of worldly goods, and then wondered why they 'd done it. But for her—the one you 're looking at——"

He broke off. "You never heard of De Larade? De Larade spent all of his short life looking for animate beauty, and worshiping it when he found it. But he died leaning too far over a balcony to pick a flower for the woman you 're staring at."

"Why?" asked Vi again. "You knew her, of course. Tell me about her."

"I 'm going to," said Leighton. "The first time I saw her on the stage she seemed to me merely an extra-graceful and extra-sensuous Spanish dancer. Nothing to rave over, nothing to stimulate a jaded palate. I

could have met her; I decided I did n't want to. Later on I did meet her, not in her dressing-room, but at a house where she was the last person I expected to see."

Leighton picked up a cigarette, lighted it, and sat down.

"The place ought to have protected her," he continued, "but when you 've seen two thirds of a woman's body, it takes a lot of atmosphere to make you forget it. We were in a corner by ourselves. . I can't remember just what I did. Probably laid my hand on her arm with intent. Well, Vi, she did n't thrill the way your blood and mine has thrilled an occasion. She just shrank. Then she frowned, and the frown made her look really ugly. 'Do n't forget,' she whispered to me, 'that I 'm a married woman. I never forget it—not for one minute.' "

Leighton blew a cloud of smoke at the fire. It twisted into wreaths and whirled up the chimney.

"Quite a facer, eh?" he went on. "But it did n't down me. It only woke me up. 'Have you ever had a man sit down with you beside him and hold you so,' I asked her, 'with your back to his knees, your head in his hands and his eyes and his mouth close to yours—a man that was n't trying to get to a single goal, but was content to linger with you in the land of dreams?'

"Believe me, Vi, the soul of a pure woman that every man thinks he has a right to make love to is the shyest

of all souls. Such a woman sheds innuendo and actions with the proverbial ease of a duck disposing of a shower. But just words—the right words—will bring tears to her eyes. Well, I 'd stumbled on the right words."

"'No,' she said, with a far-away look, 'I 've never had a man hold me like that. Why?'"

"'Why?' I said, 'Because I will—some day.'"

"'You!'"

"I can't give you all the derision she put into that 'you!' Then her face and her eyes went as hard as flint. 'Money?' she asked, and I answered, 'No; love.'"

Leighton looked at his cigarette end and flipped it into the fire.

"She laughed, of course, and when she laughed she became to me the most unattainable and consequently the most desirable of women. I was at that age.

"Well, to cut the story short, I went mad over her, but it was n't the madness that loses its head. It was just cunning—the cunning with a touch of fanaticism that always reaches its goal. I laid seige to her by day and by night, and at last, one day, she sent for me. She was alone; I could see that she meant us to be alone. She made me sit down. She stood in front of me. To my eyes she had become beautiful. I wanted her, really wanted her.

"What she said was this: 'I 've sent for you because, if you keep on, you 're going to win. No, do n't get

up. Before you keep on, I want to tell you something about myself—about what I believe with all my soul. I do n't have to tell you that I 'm a good woman; you know it. The first time you saw me dance you were rather disgusted, were n't you? I nodded. 'What do you think of my dancing now?"

"I remember my answer to that. It was: 'You possess people gradually, you hold them forever. It 's more than personality with you, it 's power.'

"Her eyes were fastened on me. They drew mine. 'That 's right,' she said; 'look at me. I want you to look at me. You see I 'm an ugly woman.' I cried out in protest, and I meant it. Her face went suddenly hard. 'You fool,' she said, 'say that I 'm pretty—say it now!' And I cried out at her, 'Not when you look like that. But you can assume beauty. You know it.'

"She seemed to pause in her thoughts at that and smiled. 'Can I—for you?' she asked in a way that made her divine. Then she jerked herself back. 'I 'm an ugly woman. My body is wonderful. Look!' She raised her long arms, which were bare, gave a half-turn, and glanced at me over her shoulder. An apparently simple movement, but it was consummate in grace and display. 'You see?' she said, with a flashing smile. Then she turned and stood stolidly. 'I did n't have a body worth speaking of once. What I 've got I made—every bit of it.'

"She sat down sidewise on a chair, folded her arms on the back of it, and looked at me over them. 'I have that power you were speaking of. Do you know just in what consists a woman's power over a man? I 'll tell you: in keeping eternally just one thing that he wants.'

"She paused a long time on that, then she went on: 'Some women hold their own in the world and their men by beauty, others by wit, others by culture, breeding, and occasionally there 's a woman clever enough to hold her place and her man by wealth. I 've got none of these things. I 've got only one great gift of God by which I hold my power. When that 's gone, all is gone. Wise people have told me so. I know it is true.' She rose slowly, came and stood close beside me. 'It 's—it 's this—that I 'm still my own. Do you want to—to rob me?' "

Leighton paused, staring into the fire.

"That was the time," he said, "I went off on my longest shooting-trip. I never saw her again." He looked up. Vi was very pale.

"You have been cruel—cruel to me," she said.

Leighton sprang to his feet and started walking up and down.

"I have not," he said. "The trouble with you women is you 're forever wanting to have your cake and eat it, too. If you thought I was going to comfort you with

sophist assurances that there 's a way out of paying the price for the kind of life you 've led, you were just wrong. What I 'm trying to do is to give you a prescription for an individual sick soul, not a well one."

He stopped and pointed at the picture lying on Vi's lap.

"Do n't you see where her philosophy helps you? You 've got all the elements of power that she lacked —beauty, wit, breeding, wealth, and—yes—and mind. She had that, too, but she did n't know it. With all that of your cargo left, can't you trade honestly with life? Can't you make life worth while, not only just to yourself? You 'll be trading in compensations, it 's true."

Leighton started walking up and down again.

"In one of my many brilliant moments," he went on, "I defined a compensation to Lewis as something that does n't quite compensate. There you have the root of most of the sadness in life. But believe me, my dear girl, almost all the live people you and I know are trading in compensations, and this is what I want you to fasten on. Some of them do it nobly."

Leighton stood with folded arms, frowning at the floor. Vi looked up at him but could not catch his eye. She rose, picked up her wraps, and then came and stood before him. She laid her fingers on his arms.

"Grapes," she said, still without a drawl, "you *have*

helped me—a lot. Good night." She held up her lips.

"No, Vi," said Leighton, gravely. "Just give up paying even for kindness with a kiss."

Vi nodded her head.

"You 're right; only—that kiss would n't have been as old as I." She turned from him. "I do n't think I 'll call you 'Grapes' any more."

"Yes, you will," said Leighton. "We 're born into one name; we earn another. We 've got a right to the one we earn. You see, even a man can't have his cake——"

But, with a wave of her hand, Vi was gone. Leighton heard Nelton running down the stairs to call a cab for her.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MLLE. FOLLY DELAIRES was not born within a stone's throw of the Paris fortifications, as her manager would have liked you to believe, but in an indefinite street in Cockneydom, so like its mates that, in the words of Folly herself, she had to have the homing instinct of a pigeon to find it at all. Folly's original name had been—but why give it away? She was one of those women who are above and beyond a name—of a class, or, rather, of a type that a relatively merciful world produces sparingly. She was all body and no soul.

From the moment that Lewis kissed Folly, and then kissed her several times more, discovering with each essay depths in the art which even his free and easy life had never given him occasion to dream of, he became infatuated—so infatuated that the following dialogue passed over him and did not wake him.

"Why are you crying?" asked Lewis, whom tears had never before made curious.

"I 'm crying," gasped Folly, stamping her little foot, "because it 's taken so *long!*"

Lewis looked down at her brown head, buried against his shoulder, and asked dreamily:

"Are you spirit and flower, libertine and saint?"

To which Folly replied: "Well, I was the flower-girl once in a great hit, and I played 'The Nun' last season, you remember. As for spirits, I had the refusal of one of the spirit parts in the first "Blue Bird" show, but there were too many of them, so I turned it down. I 'd have felt as though I 'd gone back to the chorus. Libertine,' she mused finally—"what *is* a libertine?"

Lewis's father could have looked at Folly from across the street and given her a very complete and charming definition for a libertine in one word. But Lewis had not yet reached that wisdom which tells us that man learns to know himself last of all. He did not realize that your true-born libertine never knows it. Whatever Folly's life may have been, and he thought he had no illusions on that score, he seized upon her question as proving that she still held the potential bloom of youth and a measure of innocence.

To do her justice, Folly was young, and also she had asked her question in good faith. As to innocence—well, what has never consciously existed, causes no lack. Folly's little world was exceedingly broad in one way and as narrow in another, but, like few human worlds, it contained a miracle. The miracle was that it abso-

lutely satisfied her. She dated happiness, content, and birth itself from the day she went wrong.

She had the appearance of being frank, open, and lovable, just as she had that appearance of culture which every woman of her type gets from the cultivated class of men they prey upon. Pet her, and she murmured softly in the king's best English: scratch her, and, like the rock that Moses struck, she burst forth in a surprising torrent. Without making others merry, she was eternally merry. Without ever feeling the agony of thirst, she instilled thirst. A thousand broken-hearted women might have looked on her as an avenging sword, if the sword had n't been two-edged. She had a motto, a creed, a philosophy, packed into four words: "Be loved; never love."

If both parts of this creed had not been equally imperative, Lewis might have escaped. His aloofness was what doomed him. Like all big-game hunters, Folly loved the rare trophy, the thing that 's hard to get. By keeping his distance, Lewis pressed the spring that threw her into action. Almost instinctively she concentrated on him all her forces of attraction; and Folly's forces of attraction, once you pressed the spring, were simply dynamic. Beneath that soft, breathing skin of hers was such store of vitality, intensity, and singleness of purpose as only the vividly monochromatic ever bring to bear on life.

Lewis, unconsciously in very deep waters indeed, reached London in a state of ineffable happiness. Not so Folly. Lewis had awakened in her desire. With her, desire was merely the prelude to a natural consummation. Folly was worried because one of the first and last things Lewis had said to her was, "Darling, when will you marry me?" To which she had replied, but without avail, "Let 's think about that afterward."

When Lewis reached the flat on a Saturday night, he did not have to tell his father that something wonderful had happened. Leighton saw it in his face—a face suddenly become more boyish than it had ever been before. They rushed feverishly through dinner, for Lewis's mood was contagious. Then they went into the living-room, and straight for the two big leather chairs which, had they lacked that necessary measure of discretion which Nelton had assigned to them, might have told of many a battle of the mind with the things that are.

Well, Boy," said Leighton, "what is it?"

"Dad," cried Lewis, with beaming face, "I 've found the woman—the all-embracing woman."

Leighton's mind wandered back to the tales of Lewis's little pal Natalie.

"Tell me about her—again," he said genially.

"Again!" cried Lewis. "But you 've never heard of her—not from me, anyway."

"What 's her name?" asked Leighton, half aroused.

"Her name," said Lewis, smiling absently into the fire, "is Folly—Folly Delaires."

Leighton was a trained stalker of dangerous game. Surprise never startled him into movement. It stilled him. Old Ivory had once said of him that he could make his heart stop beating at the smell of elephant; which is quite a different thing from having your heart stop beating on its own hook. When Lewis said, "Folly —Folly Delaires," Leighton suddenly became intensely still. He remained still for so long that Lewis looked up.

"Well, Dad, what is it?" he asked, still smiling. "Have you heard of her?"

"Yes," said Leighton, quietly, "I 've heard of her. I 've even seen her. She 's a beautiful—she has a beautiful body. Tell me just how it happened."

Then Lewis talked, and Leighton appeared to listen. He knew all the stages of that *via dolorosa* too well to have to pay close attention to Lewis's description of the first emotional step of man toward man's surest tribulation.

There was no outburst from Leighton when Lewis finished. On the contrary, he made an effort to hide his thoughts, and succeeded so well that, had it not been for a touch of bitterness in his smile, Lewis might have been led to think that with this active calm his

father would have received the announcement of his son's choice of any woman.

"Dad," said Lewis, troubled, "why do you smile like that?"

"I am smiling," said Leighton, "at the tragedy of philanthropy. Any man can get; it takes a genius to give. There are things I 've got that I 'd like to give you now—on the eve of your greatest trouble." Lewis threw up his head in amazement. He would have protested but, with a half-raised hand, Leighton stilled him. "No," he went on, "I do n't expect you to acquire prescience all in a moment, nor do I expect myself to acquire the genius of giving to a sudden need in half an hour. Let 's let things stand this way. You love Folly Delaires; I do n't. I do n't want to be converted, and you do n't. But one of us has simply got to be, because—well—because I like to think we 've lived too long together in spirit to take to two sides of a fence now."

Lewis felt a sudden depression fall on him, all the more terible for the exaltation that had preceded it.

"Two sides of a fence, Dad?" he said. "That can never be. I—I 've just got to convert you. When you know her, she 'll help me."

The two rose to their feet on a common impulse. Leighton laid his hand on Lewis's shoulder.

"Boy," he said, "forgive me for making your very

words my own. I have no illusions as to the power of woman. She is at once the supreme source of happiness and of poignant suffering. You think your woman will help you; I think she 'll help me. That neutralizes her a bit, does n't it? It reduces our battle to the terms of single combat—unless one of us is right about Folly."

"But, Dad," stammered Lewis, "I do n't *want* a battle."

Leighton pressed his hand down. Unconsciously Lewis straightened under the pressure.

"Listen to this," said Leighton. "The battles of life are n't served up like the courses at a dinner that you can skip at will. In life we have to fight. Mostly we have to fight people we love for things we love better. Sometimes we fight them for the very love we bear them. You and I are going to fight each other because we can't help it. Let 's fight like gentlemen—to the finish—and smile. My boy, you do n't know Folly."

"It 's you who do n't know Folly, Dad," said Lewis. He tried to smile, but his lips twitched treacherously. Not since Leighton had gambled with him, and won all he possessed, had such a blow been dealt to his faith.

CHAPTER XXXV

BOTH Lewis and his father passed a miserable night, but not even Nelton could have guessed it when the two met in the morning for a late Sunday breakfast. Leighton felt a touch of pride in the bearing of his son. He wondered if Lewis had taken to heart a saying of his: "To feel sullen is human nature; to show it is ill breeding." He decided that he had n't, on the grounds that no single saying is ever more than a straw tossed on the current of life.

When they had finished breakfast in their accustomed cheerful silence, Leighton settled down to a long cigar and his paper.

"I suppose you 're off to see your lady," he said casually.

Lewis laughed.

"Not yet. She is n't up until twelve ever."

"Does n't get up until twelve?" said Leighton. "You 've found that out, eh?"

"I did n't say 'does n't get up'; I said 'is n't.' She gets up early enough, but it takes her hours. I 've never even heard of a woman that takes such care of herself."

Leighton laid his paper aside.

"By the way," he said, "I 've a confession to make to you, one that has worried me for some days. Your little affair drove it out of my mind last night."

"Well, Dad, go ahead," said Lewis. "I won't be hard on you."

"Have you any recollection of what you were working on before you went away?"

For a moment Lewis's face looked blank, then suddenly it flushed. He turned sharp eyes on his father.

"I left the studio locked," he said.

Leighton colored in his turn.

"I forgive you that," he said quietly. "Just after I came back to town Vi called and told me she had been posing for you. She said she had left something in the studio that she wanted to fetch herself. She asked me for the key."

Lewis's hands were clenched.

"Well?" he asked.

"I went with her—to the door. She asked me to wait outside. She was gone a long time. I heard her sobbing——"

"Sobbing? Vi?"

Leighton nodded.

"So—so I went in."

Father and son looked steadily at each other for a moment. Then Lewis said:

"You 've forgiven me for my thought, Dad; now I beg your pardon for it. I suppose you saw that that bit of modeling was never intended for the Salon? It was meant for Vi—because—well, because I liked her enough to——"

"I know," interrupted Leighton. "Well, it worked. It worked as such cures seldom do. While Vi was sobbing her heart out on the couch, I smashed up the statue with a mallet. That 's my confession."

Lewis did not move.

"Did you hear what I said?" asked Leighton. "I smashed up your model of Vi."

"I heard you, Dad," said Lewis. "But you must n't expect me to get excited over it, because it 's what I should have done myself, once she had seen it."

"When I did it," continued Leighton, "I had no doubts; but since then I 've thought a lot. I want you to know that if that cast had gone into marble or bronze, it would have had the eternal life of art itself."

Lewis flushed with pleasure. He knew that such praise from his father must have been weighed a thousand times before it gained utterance. Only from one other man on earth could commendation bring such a thrill. As the name of Le Brux came to his mind, it fell from his father's lips.

"Le Brux has been giving me an awful talking to."

"Le Brux!" cried Lewis. "Has he been here?"

"Only in spirit," said Leighton, smiling. "And this is what he said in his voice of thunder: 'If I had been here, I would have stood by that figure with a mallet and smashed the head of any man that raised a finger against it. What is the world coming to when a mere life weighs more in the balance than the most trifling material expression of eternity?'

" 'But, Master,' I said, 'a gentleman must always remember the woman.'

"To which he replied, 'What business has an artist to be anything so small as a mere gentleman? It is not alone for fame and repute that we great have our being. If by the loss of my single soul I can touch a thousand other souls to life, bring sight to the blind and hearing to ears that would not hear, what, then, is my soul? Nothing.' "

Leighton stopped and leaned forward.

"Then he said this, and the thunder was gone from his voice: 'When all the trappings of the world's religions have rotted away, the vicarious intention and example of Christ will still stand and bring a surge to the hearts of unforgetful men. Thou child, believe me, what humanity has gained of the best is founded solidly on sacrifice—on the individual ruin of many men and women and little children.' "

Leighton paused. Lewis was sitting with locked

hands. He was trying to detach his mind from personalities.

"That's a great sophistry, is n't it?" he said.

"Do you know the difference between a sophistry and a great sophistry?" asked Leighton. "A sophistry is a lie; a great sophistry is merely super-truth."

"I can see," he went on, "that it 's difficult for you to put yourself outside sculpture. Let 's switch off to literature, because literature, next to music, is the supreme expression in art. I heard one of the keenest men in London say the other day, 'The man who writes a book that everybody agrees with is one of two things: a mere grocer of amusement or a mental pander to cash.'

"You 've read Irving's tales of the Catskills and of the Alhambra. Vignettes. I think I remember seeing you read Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter." I pick out two Americans because to-day our country supports more literary grocers and panders than the rest of the world put together. It is n't the writers' fault altogether. You can't turn a nation from pap in a day any more than you can wean a baby on lobster *à la* Newburg.

"But to get back. You might say that Irving gives the lie to my keen friend unless you admit, as I do, that Irving was not a writer of books so much as a painter of landscapes. He painted the scenes that were dear to his heart, and in his still blue skies he hung

the soft mists of fable, of legend, and of the pageant of a passing race. Hawthorne was his antithesis—a painter of portraits of the souls of men and women. That 's the highest achievement known to any branch of art." Leighton paused. "Do you know why those two men wrote as they did?"

Lewis shook his head.

"Because, to put it in unmistakable English, they had something on their chest, and they had to get it off. Irving wrote to get away from life. Hawthorne never wrote to get away from life,—he wrote himself into it forever and forever."

Leighton paused to get his cigar well alight.

"And now," he went on, "we come to the eternal crux. Which is beauty? Irving's placid pictures of light, or Hawthorne's dark portrayals of the varying soul of man?" He turned to Lewis. "What 's your idea of a prude?"

"A prude," stammered Lewis—"why a prude 's a person with an exaggerated idea of modesty, is n't it?"

"Bah!" said Leighton, "you are as flat as a dictionary. A prude is a far more active evil than that. A prude, my boy, is one who has but a single eye, and that in the back of his head, and who keeps his blind face set toward nature. If he would be content to walk backward, the world would get along more easily, and would like him better the farther he walked. The rea-

son the live world has always hated prudes is that it 's forever being stumbled on by them. Your prude clutches Irving to the small of his back and cries, 'This alone is beauty!' But any man with two eyes looks and answers, 'You are wrong; this is beauty alone.'

"And now do you see where we 've come out? To make a thing of beauty alone is to bring a flash of joy to a hard-pressed world. But joy is never a force, not even an achievement. It 's merely an acquisition. It is n't alive. The man who writes on paper or in stone one throbbing cry of the soul has lifted the world by the power of his single arm. He alone lives. And it is written that you shall know life above all the creatures that are in sea and land and in the heavens above the earth by this sign: sole among the things that are, life is its own source and its own end."

Leighton stopped.

"You see now," he added, "why half of me is sorry that it let the other half smash up that cast. What claim has a puny person against one flicker of eternal truth?"

"Yes," said Lewis, slowly, "I see. I can follow your logic to the very end. I can't answer it. All I know is that I myself—I could n't have paid the price, nor —nor let Vi pay it."

"And to tell you the truth," said Leighton with a smile, "I do n't know that I 'm sorry."

Lewis rose to his feet.

"Well, Dad," he said, "it 's about twelve o'clock."

"Go ahead, my boy," said Leighton. "Bring the lady to lunch to-day or any other day—if she 'll come. Just telephone Nelton."

CHAPTER XXXVI

DURING the next few days Leighton saw little of his son and nothing of Folly, but he learned quite casually that the lady was occupying an apartment overlooking Hyde Park. From that it was easy for him to guess her address, and one morning, without saying anything to Lewis of his plans, he presented himself at Folly's door. A trim maid opened to his ring.

"Is Mlle. Delaires in, my dear?" asked Leighton.

The maid stiffened, and peered intently at Leighton, who stood at ease in the half-dusk of the hall. When she had quite made out his trim, well-dressed figure, she decided not to be as haughty as she had at first intended.

"Miss Delaires," she said, without quite unbending, however, "is not in to callers at half after ten; she 's in her bath."

"I am fortunate," remarked Leighton, coolly. "Will you take her my card?" He weighted it with a sovereign.

"Oh, sir," said the maid, "it 's not fair for me to take it. She won't be seeing you. I can promise."

"Where shall I wait?" asked Leighton, stepping past her.

"This way, sir."

He was shown into a small, but dainty, sitting-room. The door beyond was ajar, and before the maid closed it he caught a glimpse of a large bedroom still in disarray. In the better light the maid glanced at his face and then at his card.

"What kin are you to Mr. Lewis Leighton, please, sir?" she asked.

"I have every reason to believe that I 'm his father," said Leighton, smiling.

"I should say you had, sir," answered the maid, with a laugh, "if looks is a guaranty. But even so she won't see you, I 'm afraid."

"I do n't mind much if she does n't," said Leighton. "Just to have had this chat with you makes it a charming morning."

In saying that Miss Delaires was in her bath, the maid had committed an anachronism. Folly was not in her bath. She had been in her bath over an hour ago; now she was in her bandages.

Folly's bath-room was not as large as her bedroom, but it was larger than anything since Rome. To the casual glance, its tiled floor and walls and its numerous immaculate fittings, nickel-trimmed and glass-covered, gave the impression of a luxurious private-clinic

theater. Standing well away from one wall was, in fact, a glass operating-table of the latest and choicest design. A more leisurely inspection of the room, however, showed this operating-table to be the only item—if a large-boned Swedish masseuse be omitted—directly reminiscent of a surgery. All the other glittering appliances, including an enormous porcelain tub, were subtly allied to the cult of healthy flesh.

At the moment when the maid entered with Leighton's card, Folly was virtually indistinguishable. She could only be guessed at in the mummy-like form extended, but not stretched, if you please, on the operating-table. Her face, all but a central oval, was held in a thin mask of kidskin, and her whole body, from neck to peeping pink toes, was wrapped closely in bandages soaked with cold cream. The bath-tub was still half-full of tepid water, from which rose faint exhalations of the latest attar, so delicate that they attained deception, and made one look around instinctively for flowers.

Folly's big brown eyes seemed to be closed, but in reality they were fixed on a little clock in plain, white porcelain, to match the room, which stood on a glass shelf high on the wall in front of her. "I 'm sure that old clock has stopped," she cried petulantly to the masseuse. "Tell me if it 's ticking."

"Ut 's ticking," said the *masseuse,* patiently. Then

she added, as though she were reciting: "Be mindful. Youth is a fund that can be saved up like pennies. The tenure of youth and beauty is determined by the amount and the quality——"

"Of relaxation," chanted Folly, breaking in. "It is not enough that the body be relaxed; wrinkles come from the mind. Relax your mind even as you relax your fingers and your toes. Tra-la-la, la-la!" Folly wriggled the free tips of her pink toes. She felt the maid come in. "What do you want, Marie?"

"Nothing, Miss," said the maid; "only I think something must of happened."

"Nothing, only something 's happened," mimicked Folly. "Well, what 's happened?"

"It 's Mr. Lewis's governor, Miss, please. He 's here, and he says he just must see you."

"So you let him in, did you? At half-past ten in the morning? How much did he give you?"

"Oh, nothing at all, Miss." Marie paused. "He 's that charming he did n't have to give me anything."

"H—m—m!" said Folly. "Well, go ask him what he wants."

"He won't say, Miss. He 's that troubled he just keeps his eyes on the floor, an' says as he has something private he must tell you. Perhaps Mr. Lewis has broke his leg. I 'm sure I do n't know."

"Come on, Buggins," said Miss Delaires to the mas-

seuse. "Do n't you hear? There 's a gentleman waiting to see me."

Buggins shook her head.

"The hour ut is not finish," she said calmly. "Five minutes yet." And for five long minutes Folly had to wait. Then the *masseuse* went swiftly into action. Off came the mask and the long, moist bandages. As the bandages uncoiled, Marie rolled them up tightly and placed them, one after the other, on the glass shelves of a metal sterilizer. Buggins rolled up her white sleeves, and entered forthwith on the major rite.

First she massaged Folly's full, round neck; then her swift, deep fingers, passed down one arm and felt out every muscle, every joint, to the tips of Folly's fingers. Back up the arm again, across the bosom, and down the other arm. Back to the neck once more, and then down and around the body to the very last joint of Folly's very last and very little toe.

Folly let go a great sigh, sprang from the table, and stood erect, young and alive in every fiber, in the center of the blue and white bath-rug. The film of cold cream was quite gone. But the *masseuse* was not yet content. She caught up a soft, scented towel and passed it deftly over arms, body, and legs, not forgetting the last little toe. When she finished, she was on her knees. She looked up and nodded to Folly's inquiring glance.

Folly gave a little laugh of pure delight, and

stretched. She held her doubled fists high above her head. Her whole body glowed in an even, unblemished pink. Verily, it seemed to breathe; it breathed with the breath of flowers. And no wonder!

When she had finished stretching, Marie was holding ready a gown of silk,—dark blue, with a foam of lace at the throat and on the broad half-sleeves,—and Buggins had placed lamb's-wool slippers just before her feet. But Folly was too full of animal to be even so softly imprisoned just yet. With a chuckle of mischief, she gave them each a quick push and darted across the room and out by the door.

Maid and masseuse followed her into the bedroom with protesting cries. The bedroom had been put in order. Only the bed itself, dressed merely in a fresh white sheet and pillows, looked a little naked, for the bedclothes proper had been carried out to air. In the center of the bed was Folly, curled up like a kitten. Her hair had tumbled down into two thick, loose braids. She submitted now to the gown, and wrapped herself carefully in it. Propped high against the pillows, a braid of brown hair falling forward over each shoulder, and her bare arms lying still at her sides, she looked very demure indeed and very sweet.

"Bring tea, Marie," she said softly, "and show in Daddy Leighton."

CHAPTER XXXVII

LEIGHTON'S first feeling on entering Folly's bedroom was one of despair. All his knowledge of the highways and byways of the feminine mind was only enough to make him recognize, as he glanced about the room, that he was about to encounter more than a personality, that he was face to face with a force.

The most illuminating thing that can be said about Folly's bedroom is that Leighton saw the bedrooom—the whole of it—before he consciously saw Folly. The first impression that the room gave was one of fresh air—the weighted air of a garden in bloom, however, rather than that of some wind-swept plain. The next, was one of an even and almost stolid tone, neither feminine nor masculine, in the furnishings. They were masterfully impersonal.

To Leighton, who had had the run of every grade of greasy, professional dressing-room, chaotic and slovenly beyond description, and of boudoirs, professional and otherwise, each in its appropriate measure a mirror of the character of its occupant, the detachment of this big room came as a shock. There were only eight pieces of furniture, of which four were chairs, yet there was

no sense of emptiness. The proportions of the remaining objects would have dwarfed a far larger space.

Along the whole length of one wall stood an enormous press in mahogany, with sliding-doors. Two of the doors were slightly open, for Folly knew that clothes, like people and flowers, need a lot of air. Leighton caught a glimpse of filmy nothings hanging on racks; of other nothings, mostly white, stacked on deep shelves; of a cluster of hats clinging like orchids to invisible bumps; and last and least, of tiny slippers all in a row.

At right angles to the press, but well away from it, stood a dressing-table surmounted by a wide, low swivel-mirror. The table was covered with tapestry under glass. The dull gleam of the tapestry seemed to tone down and control the glittering array of toilet articles in monogrammed gold. Facing the press, stood a large trinity cheval-glass, with swinging wings. In the center of the room was the bed. Behind the bed and on each side of it were two high windows. They carried no hangings, but were fitted with three shades, differing in weight and color, and with adjustable porcelain venetian blinds which could be made to exclude light without excluding air.

Folly's bed was a mighty structure. Like the rest of the furniture, it was of mahogany. It was a four-poster, but posts would be a misleading term applied to

the four fluted pillars that carried the high canopy. The canopy itself was trimmed with no tassels or hangings except for a single band of thick tapestry brought just low enough to leave the casual observer in doubt as to whether there really was a canopy at all.

Having taken in all the surroundings at a glance, Leighton's eyes finally fell upon Folly. She lay in a puzzling, soft glow of light. Resting high on the pillows, she reached scarcely half-way down the length of the great bed. For a second they looked at each other solemnly. Then Leighton's glance passed from her face to the two braids of hair, down the braids to her bare arms demurely still at her sides, down her carefully wrapped figure, down, down to her pink toes. Folly was watching that glance. As it reached her toes, she gave them a quick wriggle. Leighton jumped as if some one had shot at him, and solemnity made a bolt through the open windows, hotly pursued by a ripple and a rumble of laughter.

When Leighton had finished laughing, he sat down in a chair and sighed. He was trying to figure out just what horse-power it would have taken to drag him away from Folly at Lewis's age. Where was he going to find the power? For the first time in many years he trembled before a situation. He began to talk casually, trying to lead up to the object of his call. Two things, however, distracted him. One was the puzzling glow

of light that bathed Folly and the bed, the other was Folly herself.

Folly was very polite indeed as far as occasional friendly interjections went, but as to genuine attention she was distinctly at fault. She did not look at Leighton while he talked, but held her gaze dreamily on what would have been the sky above her had not three floors of apartments, a roof, and several other things intervened.

Finally Leighton exclaimed in exasperation:

"*What* are you staring at?"

Folly started as though she had just wakened, and turned her eyes on him.

"You 're too far away," she said. "If you really want to talk to me, come over here." She patted the bed at her side.

Leighton crossed over, and sat on the edge of the bed. Something made him look up. His jaw dropped. There was a canopy to Folly's bed. It consisted of one solid sweep of French mirror so limpid that reflection became reality. It was fringed with tiny veiled lights.

Once more Folly's gay ripple of laughter rang out, but it was unaccompanied this time. Leighton's fighting blood was up. He stared at her stolidly.

"Look here," he said, "I *do* want to talk to you. Put out those cursed little lights!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Folly as she switched off the lights, "you 're such a funny man! You make me laugh. Please do n't do it any more."

"I won't try any harder than I have so far," said Leighton, grimly. "This is what I came to say to you. My boy wants to marry you. I do n't want him to. I might as well confess that during the last ten minutes I 've given up any ideas I had of buying you off. I 'm not worth a million."

"You poor dear," said Folly, "do n't worry any longer. I do n't want to marry Lew. Ask me something else."

"I will," said Leighton. "It 's just this. Chuck Lew over. Get rid of him. It will hurt him, I know. I can understand that better now than I did before. But I 'd rather hurt him a bit that way than see him on the rack."

"Thanks," said Folly; "but, you see, I can't get rid of him. You can't get rid of something you have n't got." She smiled. "Do n't you see? I 'll have to get him before I can oblige you."

"Do n't bother," said Leighton. "A clever woman like you often gets rid of something she has n't got. Look here, you do n't want to marry Lew, and, what 's more, you do n't love him. You could n't marry him if you wanted to. You know it is n't in you to marry any man. But I tell you, Folly, if it really was in you

truly to marry Lew, I 'd give in and bless you. I would n't have yesterday, but I would to-day; because, my dear, you are simply made up of charms. The only thing missing is a soul."

"You talk better than Lew—not so silly," remarked Folly. "But what 's the use of all this palaver about marrying? I 've told you I do n't want to marry him."

"Well, what do you want, then?"

"I want Lew," said Folly, smiling. She sat up, and drew her knees into the circle of her arms. "He 's an awfully nice boy. So like you, Marie says. I just want him to have. *You* know."

"Yes," said Leighton, dryly. "Well, you can't have him."

"Can't have him?" repeated Folly, straightening. "Why not?"

"Because I do n't want you to."

"But why?"

"Well," said Leighton, "I do n't believe in that sort of thing."

"Oh, oh!" cried Folly, "now you 're trying to make me laugh again! By the way, *are* you Mr. Grapes Leighton?"

"I am," said Leighton, flushing.

Folly called the maid.

"Marie," she said, "bring me my scrap-book—the oldest one."

Leighton moved back to the chair and sat down with a resigned air. Marie brought in a huge scrap-book, and placed it on a bracket tea-tray that swung in over the bed. Folly opened the book and turned the leaves slowly. "Here we are," she said at last, and read, mimicking each speaker to a turn:

"'Counsel:' 'Please, Mrs. Bing, just answer yes or no; did you or did you not meet Mr. Leighton in the corridor at three o'clock in the morning?'

"'Mrs. Bing:' 'Well, sir, yes; sir, that is, please your Honor [turning to the judge], I *did* meet Mr. Leighton in the collidoor, but 'e was eating of a bunch of grapes that innercent you 'd ha' knowed at once as *'ee* 'ad n't been up to no mischief.' [Laughter.]

"Order! Order!" boomed Folly, as she slammed the book.

Leighton shrugged his shoulders.

"That 's neither here nor there. You 'll find before you get through with life what people with brains have known for several centuries. The son that 's worth anything at all is never like his father. Sons grow."

"I do n't care anything about that," said Folly, calmly. "I 'm going to have Lew because—well, just because I want him."

"And I say you 're not."

"So?" said Folly, her eyes narrowing. Then she

smiled and added, "There 's only one way you can stop me."

"How 's that?" said Leighton.

"By making me want somebody else more."

Leighton looked at her keenly for a moment.

"I shall never do that," he said.

"Somehow," said Folly, still smiling, "you 've made a fair start. It is n't you exactly. It 's that you are just Lew—the whole of Lew and a lot of things added."

"You are blind," said Leighton; "you do n't know the difference between addition and subtraction. Anyway, even if I could do it, I would n't. I want to fight fair—fair with Lew, fair with you, if you 're fair with me, and fair with myself. But I want to fight, not play. Will you lunch at our place to-morrow?"

"Let 's see. To-morrow," said Folly, tapping her lips to hide a tiny yawn. "Well, we can't fight unless we get together, can we? Yes, I 'll come."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IMMEDIATELY upon leaving Folly, Leighton called on Lady Derl, by appointment. He had already been to Hélène with his trouble over Lewis. It was she that had told him to see Folly. "In a case of even the simplest subtraction," Hélène had said, "you 've got to know what you 're trying to subtract from."

As usual, Leighton was shown into Hélène's intimate room. He closed the door after him quickly.

"Hélène," he said, "where 's the key?"

"The key? What key?"

"The key to this door. I want to lock myself in here."

"Poor frightened thing!" laughed Hélène. "Turn around and let me look at you. Is your face scratched?"

Leighton pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his brow. He stared at each familiar object in the room as though he were trying to recall a truant mind. Finally his eyes came around to Hélène, and with a quick smile and the old toss of the head with which he was wont to throw off a mood, he brought himself back to the present.

"With time and patience," he said, as he sat down, "anybody can get a grip on a personality, but a mighty impersonality is like the Deluge or—or a steam-roller. Do I look flattened out?"

"You do, rather, for you," said Hélène. "Tell me about it from the beginning." And Leighton did. It took him half an hour. When he got through, she said, still smiling, "I 'd like to meet this Folly person."

"I see I 've talked for nothing," said Leighton. "It is n't the Folly person that flattened me out. It 's what 's around her, outside of her."

"That 's what you think," said Hélène. "But, still, it 's she I 'd like to see."

"That 's lucky," said Leighton, "because you 're going to."

"When?"

"To-morrow. Lunch."

"What 's the idea?"

"The idea is this. I 've been looking her up, viewing her cradle and her mother's cradle and that sort of thing. I 'd have liked to have viewed her father's as well, but it 's a case of *cherchez l'homme.*"

"Well?"

"Well, the young lady 's an emanation from sub-Cockneydom. My idea is that that kind can't stand the table and *grande-dame* test. I 'll supply the table, with fixtures, and you 're going to be the *grande-dame.*"

Leighton's face suddenly became boyishly pleading. "Will you, Hélène? It 's more than an imposition to ask; it 's an impertinence."

For a moment Hélène was serious and looked it.

"Glen," she said, "you and I do n't have to ask that sort of thing—not with each other. We take it. Of course I 'll come. I 'll enjoy it. But—do you think she 's really raw enough to give herself away?"

"I do n't know," said Leighton, gloomily. "I could n't think of anything else. Lunch begins to look a bit thin for the job. At first I 'd thought of one of those green-eyed Barbadian cocktails, followed by that pale-eyed Swiss wine of mine that Ivory calls the Amber Witch with the hidden punch. But I 've given them up. You see, I told her I 'd play fair if she did."

"Yes, I see," said Hélène.

A psychologist would have liked an hour to study the lightning change that came over Folly when, on the following day, she suddenly realized Lady Derl. Folly had blown into the flat like a bit of gay thistledown. For her, to lunch with one man was the stop this side of boredom; but to lunch with two was a delight. If she was allowed to pick the other woman, she could just put up with a *partie carrée*. But she had n't picked out Lady Derl. Lady Derl was something that had never touched her world except from a box across the footlights on an occasional première.

One flash of Folly's eyes took in Lady Derl, and then her long lashes drooped before Lady Derl had time to take in Folly. Folly's whole self drooped. She was still a bit of thistle-down, but its pal, the breeze, was gone. She crossed the room, barely touched Hélène's hand, and then fluttered down to stillness on the edge of a big chair.

At lunch Leighton made desperate efforts to start a breeze and failed. Folly said "Yes" and Folly said "No,"—very softly, too,—and that was all. Leighton stepped on Hélène's foot several times, but to no avail. Lady Derl was watching Folly. "Could she keep it up? Yes, she could." Lady Derl could n't talk; she wanted to laugh.

Throughout that interminable lunch, Hélène, Leighton, and Lewis saw nothing, thought nothing, but Folly, and, for all any one of them could see, Folly did n't know it. "Oh, you adorable *cat!*" thought Lady Derl. "Oh, you *adorable!*" sighed Lewis to himself, and, inwardly, Leighton groaned, "Oh, you *you!*"

Within twenty minutes of leaving the table, Folly rose from the edge of her chair and crossed to Lady Derl.

"Good-by," she breathed shyly, holding out her hand. "I must go now." Lewis sprang up to accompany her. They could see he was aching to get away somewhere where he could put his arms around her.

Leighton crossed to the door and held it open. "Good-by," said Folly to him, holding out her hand. "I 've had *such* a good time."

At the word "such," Leighton winced and flushed. Then he grinned.

"Good-by, Folly," he said. "I hope you 'll come again when you 're feeling more like yourself."

He closed the door and then rang for Nelton. Nelton came.

"Bring me the iodine," said Leighton, as with his handkerchief he stanched the blood from a bad scratch on his right wrist.

"Heavens! Glen," cried Hélène, "how did you get that?

"Did n't you see me jump when she said *'such'?"* asked Leighton. Then they sat down, and Hélène laughed for a long time, while Leighton tried not to. "Oh," he said at last, "I wish we did n't have to think of Lew!"

"You may ask for my advice now," said Hélène, a little breathlessly. "I 've got it ready."

"Thank God!" said Leighton. "What is it?"

"It 's only a plan to gain time, after all," said Hélène; "but that 's what you want—time for Lew to get his puppy eyes opened. You can elaborate the idea. I 'll just give you the skeleton."

She did, and, soon after, Leighton saw her into a

cab. He went back to the flat and waited. He knew that Lewis would not be gone long. He would be too keen to hear his father's and Lady Derl's verdict.

Leighton had just settled down to a book and a second cigar when Lewis came into the room like a breeze that had only a moment to stay.

"Well, Dad," he cried, "what have you got to say now? What has Lady Derl got to say?"

Lewis flung himself into a chair, crossed his arms, and stretched his legs straight out before him. His head hung to one side, and he was so confident of his father's verdict that he was laughing at him out of bright eyes.

Leighton laid his book aside and took his cigar from his mouth. He leaned toward his son, his elbows on his knees.

"Every time I see Miss Delaires," he said slowly, "my opinion of her charms and her accomplishments goes up with a leap."

Lewis nodded, and scarcely refrained from saying, "I told you so."

Leighton's face remained impassive. "She has a much larger répertoire than I thought," he continued; "but there 's one rôle she can't play."

"What 's that?" asked Lewis.

"Marriage."

"Why?" asked Lewis, his face setting. Then he

blurted out: "I might as well tell you, she says she does n't believe in marriage. She 's too advanced."

"Too advanced!" exclaimed Leighton. "Why, my dear boy, she has n't advanced an inch from the time the strongest man with the biggest club had a God-given right to the fairest woman in the tribe and exercised it. That was the time for Folly to marry."

"Go easy, Dad," warned Lewis.

"I 'm going to, Boy," said Leighton. "You hear a lot of talk to-day on the shortcomings of marriage as an institution. The socialists and the suffragists and a lot of other near-sighted people have got it into their heads that we 've outgrown marriage." Leighton puffed at his cigar. "Once I was invited out to dinner, and had to eat cabbage because there was nothing else. That night I had the most terrible dream of my life. I dreamed that instead of growing up, I was growing down, and that by morning I had grown down so far that, when I tried to put them on, I only reached to the crotch of my trousers. I 'll never forget those flapping, empty legs."

Lewis smiled.

"You can smile," went on Leighton. "I can't, even now. That 's what 's happened to this age. We 've outgrown marriage downward. Your near-sighted people talk of contractual agreements, parity of the sexes,

and of a lot of other drugged panaceas, with the enthusiasm of a hawker selling tainted bloaters. They do n't see that marriage is founded on a rock set deeper than the laws of man. It 's a rock upon which their jerry-rigged ships of the married state are bound to strike as long as there 's any Old Guard left standing above the surge of leveled humanity."

"And what 's the rock?" asked Lewis.

"A woman's devotion," said Leighton, and paused. "Devotion," he went on, "is an act of worship, and of prayer as well as of consecration, only, with a woman, it is n't an act at all. Sometime perhaps Hélène will talk to you. If she does, you 'll see in her eyes what I 'm trying to tell you in words."

"And—Folly?" said Lewis. His own pause astounded him.

"Yes, Folly," said Leighton. "Well, that 's what Folly lacks—the key, the rock, the foundation. The only person Folly has a right to marry is herself, and she knows it."

Lewis sighed with disappointment. He had been so sure. Leighton spoke again.

"One thing more. Do n't forget that to-day you and I—and Hélène, received Folly here as one of us."

Lewis looked up. Leighton rose, and laid one hand on his shoulder.

"Boy," he said, "do n't make a mistress out of anything that has touched Hélène. You owe that to me."

"I won't, Dad," gulped Lewis. He snatched up his hat and stick and hurried out into the open.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LEIGHTON'S heart ached for his boy as he watched him go, and during the next few weeks his pity changed into an active anxiety. In setting that trap—he could call it nothing else—for Lew, he and Hélène had put forces into conflict that were not amenable to any light control. Lewis had passed his word. Leighton knew he would never go back on it. On the other hand, for the first time in all her life Folly's primal instinct was being balked by a denial she could comprehend only as having its source in Leighton rather than in Lew.

Folly was being eaten away by desire. She was growing desperate. So were Marie and the *masseuse*. When a morning came that found Folly with purple shadows under her eyes their despair became terror.

"Madame," cried Marie, "why do n't you marry him? You 've got to stop it. You 've got to stop it. Anyway, all ways, you 've got to stop it. It 's a-eating of you up. If you 're a loving of him that much, why do n't cher?"

"Loving of him!" sneered Folly. "I—I hate him. No, no, that 's not true. I do n't hate Lew, poor dear.

It 's *them* I hate. And I *won't* be beaten." She pounded her doubled knee with her fist. "I do n't *want* to marry him; but if they push me, if they keep on pushing me——"

It can be seen from the above that Lew was beginning to get on Folly's nerves. She had long since begun to get on his. When they were with others it was all right; Folly was her old self. But whenever they were alone, the same wordy battle began and never ended. Lew grew morose, heavy. He avoided his father, but he could do no work; so time hung on his hands, and began to rot away his fiber as only too much time can.

One day Hélène sent for Leighton.

"Glen," she said, "we 've been playing with something bigger than merely Folly. I saw her to-day, just a flash in Bond Street. I saw her face. If Lew holds out another week, she 's going to marry him, and yet, somehow, I do n't believe she loves him. Something tells me you were n't wrong when you said she could love nothing but just herself."

Leighton sighed.

"I know I was n't wrong," he said. "But you are right: she 's going to marry him. And I 'll have to stand by and see him through. Watch her break him up and throw him off. And I 'll have to pick up the pieces and stick them together. One does n't like to have to

do that sort of thing twice. I did it with my own life. I do n't want to do it with Lew's. There are such a lot of patched lives. I wanted him—I wanted him——"

Hélène crossed the room quickly, and put her arms around Leighton, one hand pressing his head to her.

"Glen," she said softly, "why, Glen!"

Leighton was not sobbing. He was simply quivering from head to toe—quivering so that he could not speak. His teeth chattered. Hélène smoothed his brow and his crisp hair, shot with gray. She soothed him.

"Hélène," he said at last, "he 's my boy."

"Glen," said Hélène, "if you love him—love him like that, she can't break him up. Do n't be frightened. Go and find him. Send him to me."

Leighton did not have to look for Lew. He had scarcely reached the flat when Lew came rushing in, a transformed Lew, radiant, throbbing with happiness.

"Dad," he cried, "she 's said 'Yes.' She 's going to marry me. Do you hear, Dad?"

"Yes, I hear," said Leighton, dully. Then he tossed back his head. He would not blur Lew's happy hour. He held out his hand. "I hear," he repeated, "and I 'll—I 'll see you through."

Lewis gripped the extended hand with all his strength, then he sat down and chatted eagerly for half an hour. He did not see that his father was tired.

"Go and tell Hélène," he said when Lewis at last paused. "Telephone her that you want to talk to her."

Hélène was on the point of going out. She told Lewis to come and see her at ten the next morning. He went, and as he was standing just off the hall, waiting to be announced, the knocker on the great front door was raised, and fell with a resounding clang. Before the doorman could open, it fell again.

Lewis, startled, looked around. The door opened. A large man in evening dress staggered in. His clothes were in disorder. His high hat had been rubbed the wrong way in spots. But Lewis hardly noticed the clothes. His eyes were fastened on the man's face. It was bloated, pouched, and mottled with purple spots and veins. Fear filled it. Not a sudden fear, but fear that was ingrown, that proclaimed that face its habitual habitation. The man's eyes bulged and stared, yet saw nothing that was. He blundered past the doorman.

Lewis caught a glimpse of a tawdry woman peering out from a hansom at the disappearing man. "Thank Gawd!" he heard her say as the cab drove off.

With one hand on the wall the man guided himself toward the stairs at the end of the hall. On the first step he stumbled and would have fallen had it not been for a quick footman. The man recovered his balance and struck viciously at the servant. Then he clutched

the baluster, and stumbled his way up the stairs.

Lewis was frightened. He turned and hurried through the great, silent drawing-rooms, through the somber library, to the little passage to Hélène's room. He met the footman who had gone to announce him. He did not stop to hear what he said. He pushed by him and knocked at Hélène's door.

"Come in," she cried.

Lewis stood before her. He was excited.

"Hélène," he said, "there 's a man come in—a horrible man. He pushed by the servants. He 's gone upstairs. I think—well, I think he 's not himself. Do you want me to do anything?"

Hélène was standing. At Lewis's first words she had flushed; then she turned pale, deathly pale, and steadied herself with one hand on the back of a chair. She put the other hand to the side of her head and pressed it there.

"That 's it," she said; "he 's—he 's not himself." Then she faced Lewis. "Lew, that 's my—that 's Lord Derl that you saw."

"Hélène!" cried Lew, putting out quick hands toward her. "Oh, I 'm sorry—I 'm sorry I said that!"

His contrition was so deep, so true, that Hélène smiled, to put him at his ease.

"It 's all right, Lew; it 's all right that you saw,"

she said evenly. "Come here. Sit down here. Now, what have you got to tell me?"

Lewis was still frowning.

"It seemed," he said, "such a big thing. Now, somehow, it does n't seem so big. I just wanted to tell you that Folly has come around at last. We 're going to be married."

For a long moment there was silence, then Hélène said: "You love her, Lew? You 're sure you love her?"

Lewis nodded his head vehemently.

"And you 're sure she loves you?" asked Hélène.

"Yes," said Lewis, not so positively. "In her way she does. She says she 's wanted me from the first day she saw me."

Hélène sat down. She held one knee in her locked hands. Her face was half turned from Lewis. She was staring out through the narrow, Gothic panes of the broad window. Her face was still pale and set. Lewis's eyes swept over her. Her beauty struck him as never before. Something had been added to it. Hélène seemed to him a girl, a frail girl. How could he ever have thought this woman worldly! Her fragrance reached him. It was a fragrance that had no weight, but it bound him—bound him hand and foot in its gossamer web. He felt that he ought to strug-

gle, but that he did not wish to. He waited for Hélène to speak.

"Love," she said at last, "is a terrible thing. Young people do n't know what a terrible thing it is. We talk about the word 'love' being so abused. We think we abuse it, but it 's love that abuses itself. There are so many kinds of love, and every big family is bound to include a certain number of rotters. Love is n't terrible through the things we do to it; it 's terrible for the things it does to us."

Hélène paused.

"I 'm glad you saw what you did to-day because it will make it easier for you to understand. Your father loves me, and I love him. It 's not the love of youth. It 's the love of sanity. The love of sanity is a fine, stalwart love, but it has n't the unnamable sweetness or the ineffaceable bitterness of the love of youth. Years ago your father wanted to take me away from—from what you saw. There did not seem to be any reason why we should not go. He and I—we 're not wedded to any place or to any time. We have a world that 's ours alone. We could take it with us wherever we went."

"Hélène," whispered Lewis, "why did n't you go?"

"Hélène unlocked her hands, put them on the lounge at her sides, and stayed herself on them. She stared at the floor.

"We did n't go," she said, "because of the terrible things that love—bitter love—had done to us."

She turned luminous eyes toward Lewis.

"You say you love Folly; you think she loves you. Lew, perhaps, she *is* your pal to-day. Will she be your pal always? You know what a pal is. You 've told me about that little girl Natalie. A pal is one who can't do wrong, who can't go wrong, who can't grow wrong. Your pal is you—your blood, your body, your soul. Is Folly your blood, your body, your soul? If she is, she 'll grow finer and finer and you will, too, and years and time and place will fade away before the greatest battle-cry the world has ever known—'We 're partners.'"

Hélène turned her eyes away.

"But if you 're not really pals for always, the one that does n't care will grow coarse. If it 's Folly, her past will seize upon her. She 'll run from your condemning eyes, but you—you can't run from your own soul.

"Lew, I know. I 'm awake. Every woman has a right to an awakening, but most of them by good fortune miss it. There 's one in ten that does n't. I did n't. The tenth woman—that 's what I 'm coming to, and whether it 's the tenth woman or the tenth man, it 's all the same in bitter love."

Hélène's eyes took on the far-away look that blots

out the present world, and clothes a distant vision in flesh and blood.

"You saw what you saw to-day," she went on in a voice so low that Lewis leaned forward to catch her words. "Remember that, and then listen. The love that comes to youth is like the dawn of day. There is no resplendent dawn without a sun, nor does the flower of a woman's soul open to a lesser light. The tenth woman," she repeated, "the one woman. To her, awakening comes with a man, not through him. He is part of the dawn of life, and though clouds may later hide his shining face, her heart remembers forever the glory of the morning."

The tears welled from her eyes unheeded. Lewis leaped forward with a cry.

"Hélène! Hélène!"

She held him off.

"Do n't touch me!" she gasped. "I only wanted you to see the whole burden of love. Now go, dear. Please go. I 'm—I 'm very tired."

CHAPTER XL

LEWIS, walking rapidly toward the flat, was thinking over all that Lady Derl had said and was trying to bring Folly into line with his thoughts. He had never pictured Folly old. He tried now and failed. Folly and youth were inseparable; Folly *was* youth. Then he gave up thinking of Folly. That moment did not belong to her. As once before, the fragrance and the memory of Hélène clung to him, held him.

He passed slowly into the room where Leighton sat. He felt a dread lest his father ask him what it was Hélène had said. But he wronged his father. Leighton merely glanced up, flashed a look into the eyes of his son. He saw and knew the light that was there for the light that lingers in the eyes of him who comes from looking upon holy inner places.

For an hour neither spoke, then Leighton said:

"Going out to lunch to-day?"

"No," said Lewis; "I 've told Nelton I 'd be in."

"About this marriage," said Leighton, smiling. "Let 's look on it as a settled thing that there 's going to be a marriage. Have you thought about the date and ways and means?"

Lewis flushed.

"Do n't misunderstand me," said Leighton. "I might as well tell you that I 've decided to divide my income equally between us, marriage or no marriage."

"Dad!" cried Lewis, half protesting.

"There, there," said Leighton, "you 're not getting from me what you think. What I mean is that I 'm not making any sacrifice. I 've lived on half my income for some time. You 'll need a lump-sum of money besides. Your grandmother left you a big house in Albany. It won't bring much, but I think you 'd better sell it. It 's on the wrong side of the town now."

"I 'll do whatever you say, Dad," said Lewis.

"I suggest that you fix your marriage for six months from now," went on Leighton. "That will give us time to go over and untangle certain affairs, including the house, on the other side. It is n't altogether on account of the house I want to take you over."

Lewis had winced at six months. Now he looked questioningly at his father.

"Keep your eyes open as you go through life," continued Leighton, "and you 'll see that marriage is a great divisor. All the sums of friendship and relation are cut in two by marriage. You and I, we 've been friends, and before I surrender you I think it 's only just that I should take you over and introduce you to your inheritance."

"My inheritance?" asked Lewis.

"Yes," said Leighton, "your country."

"You might think," continued Leighton, "that I 'm an expatriate. Externally I have been, but never in the heart. I 've been waiting—waiting for our country to catch up to me. Under certain conditions a man has the right to pick out the stage of civilization best adapted to his needs. There are two ways of doing that: either go to it or make it come to you. If you 're not tied, it 's easier to go to it, because sometimes it takes more than a generation to make it come to you."

"So you 've gone to it," said Lewis.

Leighton nodded.

"Nations and individuals travel like the hands of a clock. You can't always live in the midday of your life, but you can in the midday of a nation. When you get an educated taste, you prefer pheasants, bananas, Stilton, and nations when they 're at one o'clock. The best flavor—I 'm not talking about emotions—the best flavor of anything, including life, comes with one o'clock."

"What time is it over there now?" asked Leighton.

"About eleven," said Leighton, "top wave of success. Now, these are the earmarks of success: a meticulous morality in trifles, ingrowing eyes, crudity, enthusiasm, and a majority."

"Heavens!" cried Lewis, "you told me once you were

afraid I was going to be successful. Am I earmarked like that?"

"You will be," said Leighton, "the minute you 're driven to sculpturing for the populace—for what it will bring. That 's why I 'm giving you your own income now, because, when you 're married, you 're going to be pretty hard pressed. I do n't want you to be able to justify the sale of your soul.

"I had an uncle once—he 's dead now—that had an only son named Will. Uncle Jim was a hard worker. He had a paper-mill, and he was worth a lot of money. His son Will was n't a worker. He did n't own the paper-mill, but he never let you forget he was going to. He failed his way through school, but he could n't quite fail through college. Every time he failed at anything, he used to say: 'It does n't matter. Dad will give me a start in life, won't you, Dad?' And his father would say, 'I certainly will.'

"Well, one morning a little after Will had been flunked out of college, he was standing on the lawn whittling. I happened to be looking out of the window. I saw Uncle Jim crawling across the grass under cover of a rhododendron bush to a position just behind Will. He was carrying under one arm an enormous fire-cracker, with the fuse lit. He rolled it out on the grass behind Will, and when it went off, Will went,

too. He landed seventeen feet from the hole the cracker made.

"When he 'd turned around, but before he could get his jaw up, my uncle said: 'Will, I 've always promised I 'd give you a start in life. Well, I 've given it to you—a damn good start, too, judging by the length of that jump. Now you git! Not a word. You just git!'

"Will did n't go very far away. He went to the rival town across the river. He had n't learned anything about making paper, but a New England Leighton is just naturally born knowing how to make paper. In fifteen years Will did n't have much soul left, but he had enough money to buy his father out and make him sign an agreement to retire. They were both as pleased as Punch. To the day of his death the old man would say, 'I certainly gave you a start in life, Will,' and Will would answer with a grin, 'Dad, you certainly did.'

"The moral of that yarn is that we Leightons have proved over and over that we could play the game of success when we thought it was worth while. Will's generation and mine, generally speaking, thought it was worth while. But your generation—the best of it—is n't going to think so. That 's why I 'm giving you enough money so that you won't have to think about it all the time."

"I 'm grateful, Dad," said Lewis. "It 's easier to breathe that way."

Leighton nodded. "Sometimes," he continued, "I feel guilty, as though it were cowardly not to have lived where I was put. But—have you ever seen a straw, caught on a snag, try to stop a river? To your sentimentalist that straw looks heroic; to anybody that knows the difference between bathos and pathos it simply looks silly. The river of life is bigger than that of any nation. We can't stop it, but we can swell it by going with it. Did you ever see a mule drink against the current?"

"No," said Lewis, his eyes lighting with memory of a thing that he knew.

"Did you ever see free cattle face a gale?"

"No," said Lewis again.

"Out of the mouths of the dumb come words of wisdom," said Leighton. "Go with life, Boy. Don't get stranded on a snag. You 'll only look silly. I 'm glad you 've traveled around a bit, because the wider the range of your legs the wider your range of vision, and, let me tell you, you 'll need a mighty broad field of sight to take in America and the Americans.

"Your country and mine is a national paradox. It 's the only country where you can't buy little things for money. For instance, you can't buy four seats that somebody else has a right to from a railway conductor

for sixty-two and a half cents. There is n't any price at which you can get an American to say, 'Yes, sir, thank you, sir,' every time he does anything for you."

"Lunch is served, sir, thank you, sir," announced the impassive Nelton from the doorway.

Lewis smiled, and then laughed at his father's face.

"Nelton," said Leighton, "did you hear what I was saying?"

"I did, sir, thank——"

"Yes, yes," broke in Leighton, "we know. Well, Nelton, your pay is raised. Ten per cent."

"Yes, sir," said Nelton, unmoved. "Thank *you*, sir."

"As I was saying," continued Leighton to Lewis, "a country where money can't buy little things. A leveled country where there 's less under dog than anywhere else on the face of the earth. A people that 's more communal and less socialistic than any other commonwealth. A happy nation, my boy—a happy nation of discontented units. Do you get that? Of discontented units."

"Yes, I think I do," said Lewis.

"You do n't, but you will in time," said Leighton.

CHAPTER XLI

WHEN Lewis burst upon Folly with the news that his father had given not only consent to the marriage, but half his income to smooth the way to it, Folly frowned. What was the game? she wondered. But the first thing she asked was:

"And how much is that?"

Lewis stammered, and said really he did n't know, which made Folly laugh. Then he told her about the six months and the trip to America. Whereupon Folly nodded her head and said:

"Oh, that 's it, is it? Well, your governor is willing to pay pretty thick for six months of you. All I want to know is, Will you come back to me?"

"Come back to you, Folly?" cried Lewis, "Of course I'll come back to you. Why, that 's just what I 'm going for. To sell the house and fix things so I *can* come back to you."

At the same hour Leighton was saying good-by to Hélène. He had not really come to say good-by. He had come to thank her for her sacrifice, for the things he knew she had said to Lew. He did not try to thank her in words. A boyish glance, an awkward movement,

a laugh that broke—these things said more to Hélène than words.

"So you 've got six months' grace," said Hélène, when Leighton had told her how things stood. "Glen, do you remember this: 'All erotic love is a progression. There is no amatory affection that can stand the strain of a separation of six months in conjunction with six thousand miles. All the standard tales of *grande passion* and absence are——' "

" 'Legendary hypotheses based on a neurotic foundation,' " finished Leighton. "Yes, I remember that theory of mine. I 'm building on it."

"I thought you were," said Hélène. "Do n't build too confidently. Lew has a strain of constancy in him. It 's quite unconscious, but it 's there. Just add my theory to yours."

"What 's your theory?" asked Leighton.

"My theory," said Hélène, "is that little girl Natalie. I do n't suppose she 's little now."

Leighton frowned.

"Do you know where Natalie is living? She 's *there*." His brow clouded with thoughts of the scene of his bitter love.

Hélène understood.

"I know. I thought so," she said.

"I 'll send Lewis to her."

"No, Glen," said Hélène softly, "you 'll take him to her."

When all was ready for the start, Nelton appeared before Leighton.

"Please, sir," he said, "I 've taken the liberty of packing my bags, too, thank, you, sir. I thought, sir, since you 're both going, the flat might be locked up."

"Well," said Leighton, "I suppose it might for once. Where are you off to?"

"Why, with you, sir. If you do n't mind, sir, I 'd like to see this America."

Leighton smiled.

"Come along, by all means, Nelton," he said. "Go ahead with the baggage, and see that Master Lewis and I get a compartment to ourselves. Here 's half a crown."

Leighton and Lewis were not traveling with the rush of the traffic. It was too early in the year. While the boat was not crowded, it was by no means deserted. It had just that number of passengers on board which an old traveler would like to stipulate for on buying his ticket; enough to keep the saloons from hollow echoes, and not enough to block even a single deck.

"Are these all Americans?" asked Lewis on their third day out.

Leighton glanced rapidly up and down the deck.

"No," he said, "there 's hardly a typical American

in the lot. Wrong time of year. You see there are more men than women. That 's a sure sign this is n't an American pleasure-boat. There are a good many English on board, the traveling kind. They 're going over to 'do' America before the heat comes on. What Americans you see are tainted."

"What 's a tainted American?" asked Lewis.

"I 'm a tainted American, and you are," said Leighton. "A tainted American is one who has lived so long abroad that he goes to America on business."

CHAPTER XLII

THE house that Aunt Jed had left to Natalie stood on the lip of a vast basin. From its veranda one looked down into a peaceful cup of life. The variegated green of the valley proclaimed to the wandering eye,

> "All sorts are here that all the earth yields!
> Variety without end."

There was a patchwork of fields bordered with gray stone walls, of stray bits of pasture, of fallow meadow and glint of running water, of woodland, orchard, and the habitations of man made still by distance.

Aunt Jed's house was not on the highway. The highway was miles off, and cut the far side of the basin in a long, straight slant. On that gash of white one could see occasional tiny motor-cars hurrying up and down like toys on a taut string. Only one motor, a pioneer car, had struggled up the road that led past Natalie's door, and immediately after, that detour had been marked as impassable on all the best maps.

In fact, the road up to Aunt Jed's looked more like a river-bed than a road. It had a gully and many "thank-you-ma'ams." It was plentifully sown with

pebbles as big as your head and hard as flint, which gave tit for tat to every wheel that struck them. Every time Mrs. Leighton ventured in Natalie's cart—and it was seldom indeed except to go to church—she would say, "We really must have this road fixed."

But Natalie would only laugh and say,

"Not a bit of it. I like it that way."

Natalie had bought for a song a little mare named Gipsy. Nobody, man or woman, could drive Gip; she just went. Whoever rode, held on and prayed for her to stop. Gip hated that road down into the valley. If she could have gone from top to bottom in one jump, she would have done it. As it was, she did the next best thing. What made you love Gip was that she came up the hill almost as fast as she went down.

Soon after Gip became Natalie's, she awoke to find herself famous from an attempt to pass over and through a stalled motor-car. After that the farmers used to keep an eye out for her, especially on Sundays, and give her the whole road when they saw her coming. Ann Leighton said it was undignified to go to church like that, to which Natalie replied:

"Think what it 's doing for your color, Mother. Besides, think of church. You must admit that church here has gone a bit tough. I really could n't stand it except sandwiched between two slices of Gip."

Aunt Jed's house—nobody ever called it anything else

—was typical of the old New England style, except that a broad veranda had been added to the length of the front by the generation that had outraged custom and reduced the best parlor and the front door to every-day uses. This must have happened many years before Natalie's advent, for a monster climbing rose of hardy disposition had more than half covered the veranda before she came.

The house itself was of clapboards painted white, and stood four square; its small-paned windows, flanked with green shutters, blinking toward the west. It had a very prim air, said to have been absorbed from Aunt Jed, and seemed to be eternally trying to draw back its skirts from contact with the interloping veranda and the rose-tree, which, toward the end of the flowering season, certainly gave it a mussed appearance. At such times, if the great front door was left open on a warm day, the house took on a look of open-mouthed horror, which immediately relapsed to primness once the door was closed.

Natalie was the discoverer of this evidence of personality. Sitting under the two giant elms that were the sole ornament of the soft old lawn, she suddenly caught the look on the face of the house, and called out:

"Mother, come here! Come quickly!" as though the

look could n't possibly last through Mrs. Leighton's leisurely approach.

"What is it, dear?" asked Mrs. Leighton.

"Why, the house!" said Natalie. "Look at it. It 's horrified at something. I think it must be the mess the roses have made. Can't you see what it 's saying? It 's saying, 'Well, I never!' "

Mrs. Leighton laughed.

"It does look sort of funny," she said.

Just then old mammy put her gray head out of the door to hear what the talk was about. She wore glasses, as becoming to her age, but peered over them when she wanted to see anything.

"What youans larffin' abeout?" she demanded.

"We 're laughing at the house," cried Natalie. "It 's got its mouth open and the funniest look on its face. Come and see."

"Mo' nonsense," grunted mammy and slammed the door.

Then it was that the house seemed to withdraw suddenly into the primness of virginal white paint.

"That 's what it wanted," cried Natalie, excitedly—"just to get its mouth shut. O Mother, is n't it an old *dear*?"

Stub Hollow had looked upon the new arrivals at Aunt Jed's as summer people until they began to frequent Stub Hollow's first and only Presbyterian church.

Natalie, who like all people of charm, was many years younger inside than she was out, immediately perceived that the introduction of mammy in her best Sunday turban into that congregation would do a great deal toward destroying its comatose atmosphere. Like many another New England village church, Stub Hollow's needed a jar and needed it badly. But it was n't the church that got the jar.

Upon the introduction of Gip into the family circle, it was conceded that there was no longer any reason why mammy should resign the benefits of communal worship. Consequently, with many a grunt,—for good food and better air had well nigh doubled her proportions,—mammy climbed from the veranda to the back seat of the cart and filled it. For a moment it seemed doubtful whether mammy or Gip would hold the ground, but Gip finally won out by clawing rapidly at the pebbly road and getting the advantage of the down grade.

Neither Natalie nor Mrs. Leighton ever knew just where it was they lost mammy, but it could n't have been far from the gate; for just as they were dipping into the wood half-way down the hill, Mrs. Leighton happened to glance back, missed mammy, and saw her stocky form waddling across the lawn toward the back of the house. Mrs. Leighton was also young inside. She said nothing.

When finally they drew up, with the assistance of

three broad-shouldered swains, at the church, Natalie looked back and gasped,

"Mammy! Mother, where 's mammy?"

"You do n't suppose she could have got off to pick flowers, do you?" asked Mrs. Leighton, softly.

"Why, *Mother!*" cried Natalie. "Do you know that mammy may be *killed?* We 'll have to go straight back."

"No, we won't," said Mrs. Leighton, flushing at her levity before the very portals of the church. "She 's all right. I looked back, and saw her crossing the lawn."

"Even so," said Natalie, severely, "I 'm surprised at *you.*" Then she laughed.

Church seemed very long that day, but at last they were out in the sunshine again and Gip was given her full head. No sooner had Zeke, the hired man, seized the bit than Natalie sprang from the cart and rushed to the kitchen. She found mammy going placidly about her business.

"Doan' yo' talk to me, chile," she burst out at sight of Natalie. "Doan' yo' dast talk to me!"

Natalie threw her arms about her.

"You poor mammy," she murmured. "Are n't you hurt?"

"Hurt!" snorted mammy. "Yo' mammy mought 'a' been killed ef she did n' carry her cushions along wif 'er pu'sson."

CHAPTER XLIII

SIX miles away from Aunt Jed's, on the top of a hill overlooking the Housatonic Valley, stood the Leighton homestead, a fine old-fashioned house, now unoccupied save for a care-taking farmer and his wife, who farmed the Leighton acres on shares. The homestead belonged to Lewis's father, and in the natural course of events was destined to become Lewis's property.

Great was the excitement at Homestead Farm when a telegram arrived announcing the imminent arrival of owner and son.

"Land sakes! William," gasped Mrs. Tuck, "in two days! You 'll hev to send 'em a telegram tellin' 'em it can't be done nohow. I told you my conscience was a-prickin' me over the spring cleanin'. Seems like Providence was a-jostlin' my elbow all these days, and I was jest too ornery to pay heed."

"In two days, it says," repeated William; "and we can't send no telegram because there ain't no address."

Tuck and his wife had no children. They occupied the kitchen for a living-room and the big bedroom over it at night. The main part of the house was shut up.

The hired hands occupied rooms in the barn that had once been the quarters of a numerous stable force, for the Leightons had always gone in for horses, as two or three long-standing trotting records at neighboring county fairs gave evidence.

Mrs. Tuck was not long in facing the inevitable. First of all she commandeered all the labor on the farm; then she sent a call for aid to a couple of neighbors. Within an hour all the green shutters had swung wide on their creaking hinges, and the window-sashes were up. Out of the open windows poured some dust and a great deal of commotion. Before night the big house was spick and span from garret to cellar.

"Does seem to me," said Mrs. Tuck, as she placed a very scrappy supper before William, "like dust is as human as guinea pigs. Where you say it can't get in, it jest breeds."

"Now you sit down and take it easy, Mrs. Tuck," said William, who had married late in life and never got on familiar terms with his wife. "I reckon them men-folks ain't so took with reddin' up as you think they be."

"Oh, I know," said the tired, but by no means exhausted, Mrs. Tuck, "I ain't forgettin' their innards, ef thet 's what you 're thinkin' of. You just tell Silas to kill four broilers, an' I 'll clean 'em to-night. Thet 'll give me a start, and to-morow I c'n do a few dozen

pies. I *hev* got some mince-meat, thank goodness! an' you c'n get me in some of them early apples in the morning. Seems like I 'm not going to sleep a wink for thinkin'."

Lewis and Leighton did not motor from New York to the Homestead Farm, as ten years later they might have done. Motors, while common, were still in that stage of development which made them a frequent source of revenue to the farmer with a stout team of horses. Consequently it was by train that they arrived at Leighton's home station—a station that had grown out of all recognition since last he had seen it.

However, he himself had not grown out of recognition. A lank figure of a man, red-cheeked, white-bearded, slouch-hatted, and in his shirt-sleeves, stepped forward and held out a horny hand.

"Well, Glen, how be ye? Sure am glad to see ye back."

"Me, too," said Leighton, grinning and flushing with pleasure. "Come here, Lew. Shake hands with Mr. Tuck."

"Well, I swan!" chuckled William as he crushed Lewis's knuckles. "Guess you do n't recollec' ridin' on my knee, young feller?"

"No, I do n't," said Lewis, and smiled into the old man's moist blue eyes.

"And who be this?" asked William, turning toward Nelton.

"That? Oh, that 's Nelton," said Lewis.

"Glad to meet ye, Mr. Nelton. Put it thar!" said William, holding out a vast hand.

For an instant Nelton paused, then, with set teeth and the air of one who comes to grips with an electric battery, he laid his fingers in Mr. Tuck's grasp. "Huh!" remarked William, "ye ain't got much grip. Wait tell we 've stuffed ye with buttermilk 'n' pies 'n' victuals 'n' things."

Nelton said not a word, but cast an agonized look at Leighton, who came to his aid.

"Now, William, what have you brought down?"

"Well, Glen, there 's me an' the kerryall for the folks, an' Silas here with the spring-wagon for the trunks."

"Good," said Leighton. "Here, Silas, take these checks and look after Mr. Nelton. Lew and I will go in the carryall."

"Fancy your governor a-pullin' of my leg!" murmured Nelton, presumably to Lewis, but apparently to space. "Why do n't 'e tell this old josser as I 'm a menial, and be done with it."

Old William started, stared at Nelton, then at Leighton. He walked off toward the carryall, scratching his head.

"What is it?" he asked Lewis, in a loud whisper.

"That 's dad's valet," said Lewis, grinning.

"Valley, is it?" said William, glancing over one shoulder. "Nice, lush bit o' green, to look at him. What does he do?"

"Looks after dad. Waits on him, helps him dress, and packs his bags for him."

William stopped in his tracks and turned on Leighton.

"Glen," he said, "I do n't know ez you c'n stand to ride in the old kerryall. I ain't brought no sofy pillows, ner even a fire-screen to keep the sun from sp'ilin' yer complexion."

Leighton smiled, but said nothing. They had reached the carryall, an old hickory structure sadly in need of paint. Hitched to it were two rangy bays. The harness was a piece of ingenious patchwork, fitted with hames instead of collars. Leighton stepped into the back seat, and Lewis followed. William unhitched the horses and climbed into the cramped front seat. When he had settled down, his knees seemed to be peering over the dash-board. "Gid ap!" he cried, and the bays started off slowly across the bridge.

The road to the homestead followed down the river for three miles before it took to the hills. No sooner had the carryall made the turn into the River Road than the bays sprang forward so suddenly that Lewis's

hat flew off backward, and for a moment he thought his head had followed.

"Heh!" he called, "I 've lost my hat!"

"Never mind your hat, Son," shouted William. "Silas 'll pick it up."

The bays evidently thought he was shouting at them. They let their enormous stride out another link. The carryall plowed through the dust, rattled over pebbles, and, where the road ran damp under overhanging trees, shot four streams of mud from its flying wheels. Old William chewed steadily at the cud of tobacco he had kept tucked in his cheek during the interview at the station. His long arms were stretched full length along the taut reins. If he had only had hand-holds on them, he would have been quite content. As it was, he was grinning.

"Gee, Dad!" gasped Lewis, "d' you know those horses are still *trotting!*"

Leighton leaned forward.

"Got a match, William?" he shouted above the creak and rattle of the carryall.

"Heh?" yelled William.

The bays let out another link.

"Got a match?" repeated Leighton. "I want to smoke."

William waved his beard at his left-hand pocket.

As they struck a bit of quiet, soft road, Leighton called:

"Why do n't you let 'em out? You 've gone and left your whip at home. How are we going to get up the hill?"

The grin faded from Old William's face. *"Gid ap!"* he roared, and then the bays showed what they could really do in the way of hurrying for the doctor. The old carryall leaped a thank-you-ma'am clean. When it struck, the hickory wheels bent to the storm, but did not break. Instead, they shot their load into the air. A low-hanging branch swooped down and swept the canopy, supports and all, off the carryall. William never looked back.

Lewis clung to the back of the front seat.

"D-d-dad," he stuttered, "p-please do n't say anything more to him! D-d' you know they 're *still* trotting?"

At last the bays swung off upon the steep Hill Road, and slowed down to a fast, pulling walk. Old William dropped the reins on the dash-board, made a telling shot with tobacco juice at a sunflower three yards off, and turned to have a chat.

"Glen," he said, "I reckon, after all, there 's times when you c'n do without sofy pillows."

"Why, William," said Leighton, still pale with fright, "If I 'd had a pillow, I 'd have gone fast asleep." Then he smiled. "Some of the old stock?"

William nodded.

"I do n't mind tellin' you I ain't drove like thet sence the day me 'n you——"

"Never mind since when, William," broke in Leighton, sharply. "How 's Mrs. Tuck?"

CHAPTER XLIV

"IS that the house?" asked Lewis, as they mounted the brow of the hill.

Leighton nodded.

Across a wide expanse of green that was hardly smooth enough to be called a lawn gleamed the stately homestead. It was of deep-red brick, trimmed with white. It stood amid a grove of giant sugar-maples. The maples blended with the green shutters of the house, and made it seem part and parcel of the grove. Upon its front no veranda had dared encroach, but at one side could be seen a vine-covered stoop that might have been called a veranda had it not been dwarfed to insignificance by the size of the house. The front door, which alone in that country-side boasted two leaves, was wide open, and on the steps leading up to it, resplendent in fresh gingham, stood Mrs. Tuck.

With some difficulty William persuaded the bays to turn into the long-unused drive that swept up to the front door. Leighton sprang out.

"Hallo, Mrs. Tuck!" he cried. "How are you?"

"How do you do? I 'm very pleased to see you back,

Mr. Leighton," said Mrs. Tuck, who read the best ten-cent literature and could talk "real perlite" for five minutes at a stretch. "Come right along in. You 'll find all the rooms redded up—I mean——"

"Yes, yes," laughed Leighton, "I know what you mean all right. I have n't even forgotten the smell of hot mince pies. Lew, do n't you notice a sort of culinary incense——'

"Land sakes! them pies is a-*burnin'!*" shrieked Mrs. Tuck as she turned and ran.

William offered to show the way to the bedrooms, but Leighton refused.

"No," he said, "we 'll come around and help you put up the team. No use washing up till we get our things."

Silas, with the spring-wagon, duly appeared. On top of the baggage, legs in air, was the discarded canopy of the carryall. Beside Silas sat Nelton. He was trembling all over. In his lap he held Lewis's hat. His bulging eyes were fastened on it.

"There they be," grunted Silas. "Told you they was all right. William be a keerful driver."

Nelton raised his eyes slowly. They lit, with wonder.

"Mr. Leighton," he cried, "Master Lewis, are you safe?'

"Quite safe, Nelton," said Leighton. "Why?"

Nelton mutely held out Lew's hat and jerked his head back at the wrecked canopy.

"Oh, yes," said Leighton, nodding; "we dropped those. Thank you for picking them up. Take the bags up-stairs."

"Lew," said Leighton, as they were washing, "did you use to have dinner at night at Nadir or supper?"

"Supper," said Lewis.

"Well," said Leighton, "that 's what you 'll get to-day—at six o'clock, and do n't you be frightened when you see it. It has been said of the Scotch that the most wonderful thing about them is that they can live on oats. The mystery of the brawn and muscle of New England is no less wrapped up in pies. But do n't hesitate. Pitch in. There 's something about this air that turns a nightly mixture of mince-pies, pumpkin-pies, custard-pies, lemon-pies, and apple-pies, with cheese, into a substance as heavenly light as fresh-fallen manna. It is a tradition, wisely fostered by the farmers, that the only thing that can bring nightmare and the colic to a stomach in New England are green apples and stolen melons."

Lewis was in good appetite, as was Leighton. They ate heartily of many things besides pies, went to bed at nine, and would have slept the round of the clock had not a great gong—a bit of steel rail hung on a wire—and all the multitudinous noises of farm head-

quarters broken out in one simultaneous chorus at half-past five in a glorious morning.

Noisy geese and noisier cocks, whinnying horses and lowing cattle, the rattle of milk-tins, the squeak of the well-boom, the clank of mowing-machines, the swish of a passing brush-harrow, and, finally, the clamoring gong, were too much for Nelton. Lewis, on his way to look for a bath, caught him stuffing what he called "cotton an' wool" into his ears.

"Tork about the streets of Lunnon, Master Lewis," he said. "I calls this country life *deafenin'*."

Lewis had wanted to telegraph to Natalie, but Leighton had stopped him.

"You 've waited too long for that," he had said. "You have apparently neglected Natalie and Mrs. Leighton. When people think they 've been neglected, never give them a chance to think up what they 're going to say to you. Just fall on them."

As soon as they had breakfasted, Leighton took Lewis to the top of the hill at the back of the homestead. It was a high hill. It commanded a long stretch of the Housatonic Valley to the east, and toward the west and north it overlooked two ridges, with the dips between, before the eye came up against the barrier of the Berkshire range.

Lewis drew a long breath of the cold, morning air.

"It 's beautiful, Dad," he said.

"Beautiful!" repeated Leighton, his eyes sweeping slowly and wistfully across the scene. "Boy, God has made no lovelier land."

Then he turned to the west and pointed across to the second ridge. "Do you see that gleam of white that stands quite alone?"

"Yes, I think I see what you mean," said Lewis. "'Way down, just below it, you can see the tip of a church steeple."

"So you can," said Leighton. "Well, that gleam of white is Aunt Jed's. Make for it. That 's where you 'll find Natalie."

"Is it?" said Lewis, straightening, and with a flush of excitement in his cheeks. "Are n't you coming, too?"

"No," said Leighton; "not to-day. We won't expect you back before supper. Tell Mrs. Leighton that I 'll be over soon to see her and thank her."

Lewis started off with an eager stride, only to learn that Aunt Jed's was farther away than it looked. He found a road and followed it through the valley and up the first ridge, then seeing that the road meandered off to the right into a village, he struck off across the fields straight for the distant house.

He had passed through the moist bottoms and come upon a tract of rock-strewn pasture land when he saw before him the figure of a girl. Her back was to him. A great, rough straw hat hid her head. She wore a

white blouse and a close-fitting blue skirt. She was tall and supple, but she walked slowly, with her eyes on the ground. In one hand she carried a little tin pail.

Lewis came up behind her.

"What are you looking for?" he asked.

The girl started and turned. Lewis stepped forward. They stood and stared at each other. The little tin pail slipped from the girl's hand.

"Strawberries," she stammered. "I was looking for strawberries." Then she added so low that he scarcely heard her, "Lew?"

"Nat!" cried Lewis. "It *is* Nat!"

Natalie swayed toward him. He caught her by the arms. She looked at him and tried to smile, but instead she crumpled into a heap on a rock and cried—cried as though her heart would break.

Lewis sat down beside her and put one arm around her.

"Why, Nat, are n't you glad to see me? Nat, do n't cry! Are n't you glad I 've come?"

Natalie nodded her head hard, but did not try to speak. Not till she had quite finished crying did she look up. Then her tear-stained face broke into a radiant smile.

"That 's—that 's why I 'm crying," she gasped; "because I 'm so glad."

So there they sat together and talked about what?

About strawberries. Lewis said that he had walked miles across the fields, and seen heaps of blossoms but no berries. He did n't think the wild ones had berries. Which, Natalie said, was nonsense. Of course they had berries, only it was too early. She had found three that were pinkish. She pointed to them where they had rolled from the little tin pail. Lewis picked one up and examined it.

"You 're right," he said gravely, "it 's a strawberry."

Then silence fell upon them—a long silence, and at the end Lewis said:

"Nat, do you remember at Nadir the guavas—when you 'd come out to where I was with the goats?"

Natalie nodded, a starry look in her far-away eyes.

"Nat," said Lew, "tell me about it—about Nadir—about—about everything. About how you went back to Consolation Cottage."

Natalie flashed a look at him.

"How did you know we had been back to Consolation Cottage?"

"Why, I went there," said Lewis. "It is n't three months since I went there."

"Did you, Lew?" said Natalie, her face brightening. "Did you go just to look for us?"

"Of course," said Lewis. "Now tell me."

"No," said Natalie, with a shake of her head, "you first."

CHAPTER XLV

IN the innocence of that first hour Lewis told Natalie all. He even told her of Folly, as though Folly, like all else, was something they could share between them. Natalie did not wince. There are blows that just sting—the sharp, quick blows that make us cry out, and then wonder why we cried, so quickly does the pain pass. They are nothing beside the blows that slowly fall and crush and keep their pain back till the overwhelming last.

People wonder at the cruel punishment a battered man can take and never cry out, at the calm that fills the moment of life after the mortal wound, and at the steady, quiet gaze of big game stricken unto death. They do not know that when the blood of man or beast is up, when the heart thunders fast in conflict or in the chase, there is no pain. A man can get so excited over some trifle that a bullet will plow through his flesh without his noticing it. Pain comes afterward. Pain is always an awakening.

Natalie was excited at the sudden presence of Lew and at the wonder of his tale. In that galaxy of words that painted to her a climbing fairy movement of growth

and achievement the single fact of Folly shot through her and away, but the wound stayed. For the moment she did not know that she was stricken, nor did Lewis guess. And so it happened that that whole day passed like a flash of happy light.

Natalie, in her wisdom, had gone ahead to warn Mrs. Leighton and mammy of Lewis's coming. Even so, when the two women took him into their long embrace, he knew by the throbbing of their hearts how deeply joy can shake foundations that have stood firm against the heaviest shocks of grief.

Gip and the cart, with Natalie at the helm, whisked Lewis back to the homestead. What memories of galloping ponies and a far, wide world that ride awakened they did not speak in words, but the light that was in their faces when at the homestead gate they said good night was the light that shines for children walking hand in hand in the morning land of faith.

Natalie could not eat that night. She slipped away early to bed—to the little, old-fashioned bed that had been Aunt Jed's. It, too, was a four-poster; but so pompous a name overweighted its daintiness. So light were its trimmings in white, so snowy the mounds of its pillows and the narrow reach of its counterpane, that it seemed more like a nesting-place for untainted dreams than the sensible, stocky little bed it was.

Natalie went to bed and to sleep, but scarcely had

the last gleam faded from the western sky when she awoke. A sudden terror seized her. The pillow beneath her cheek was wet. Upon her heart a great weight pressed down and down. For a moment she rebelled. She had gone to sleep in the lap of her happiest day. How could she wake to grief? A single word tapped at her brain: Folly, Folly. And then she knew—she knew the wound her happy day had left; and wide-eyed, fighting for breath, her arms outstretched, she felt the slow birth of the pain that lives and lives and grows with life.

Natalie cried easily for happiness, and so the tears that she could spare to grief were few. Not for nothing had she been born to the note of joy. Through all her life, so troubled, so thinly spread with pleasures, she had clung to her inheritance. Often had her mind questioned her heart: "What is there in this empty day? Why do you laugh? Why do you sing?" And ever her heart had answered, "I laugh and sing because, if not to-day, then to-morrow, the full day cometh."

But to-night her inheritance seemed a little and a cruel thing. Wide-eyed she prayed for the tears that would not come. Dry were her eyes, dry was her throat, and dry the pressing weight upon her heart. Hours passed, and then she put forth her strength. She slipped from the bed and walked with groping hands toward the open window. In the semi-darkness she moved like

a tall, pale light. Down her back and across her bosom her hair fell like a caressing shadow. Her white feet made no sound.

She reached the window and knelt, her arms folded upon the low sill. She tossed the hair from before her face and looked out upon the still night. How far were the stars to-night—as cold and far as on that night of long ago when she had stood on the top of the highest hill and called to the desert for Lew!

She stayed at the window for a long time, and found meager comfort at last in the thought that Lewis could not have guessed. How could he have guessed what she herself had not known? She arose and went back to bed. Then she lay thinking and planning a course that should keep not only Lewis but also Mrs. Leighton and mammy blind to the wound she bore. And while she was in the midst of planning, sleep came and made good its ancient right to lock hands with tired youth.

Leighton was crestfallen to see in what high spirits Lew had come back from his first day with Natalie. He lost faith at once in Hélène's cure. Then, as they went to bed, he clutched at a straw.

"Lew," he asked, "did you tell your pal everything?"

"Everything I could think of in the time," said Lewis, smiling. "One day is n't much when you 've

got half of two lives to go over. Of course there were things we forgot. We 'll have them to tell to-morrow."

"Was Folly one of the things you forgot?"

"No," answered Lewis and paused, a puzzled look on his brow. He was wondering why he had remembered Folly. To-night she seemed very far away. Then he threw back his head and looked at his father. "Why did you ask that?"

Leighton did not answer for a moment. Finally he said:

"Because it 's the one thing you had n't a right to keep to yourself. I 'm glad you saw that. Always start square with a woman. If you do,—afterward,—she 'll forgive you anything."

Lewis went to bed with the puzzled look still on his face. It was not because he had *seen* anything that he had told of Folly. He had told of her simply as a part of chronology—something that could n't be skipped without leaving a gap. Now he wondered, if he had had time to think, would he have told? He had scarcely put the question to himself when sleep blotted out thought.

On the next day Leighton had the bays hitched to what was left of the carryall, and with Silas and Lewis drove over to Aunt Jed's to pay his respects to Mrs. Leighton. Natalie and Lew went off for a ramble in the hills. Mammy bustled about her kitchen dreaming

out a dream of an early dinner for the company, and murmuring instructions to Ephy, a pale little slip of a woman whom the household, seeking to help, had installed as helper. Mrs. Leighton stayed with Leighton out under the elms. They talked little, but they said much.

It was still early in the day when Leighton said:

"I shall call you Ann. You must call me Glen."

"Of course," answered Mrs. Leighton, and then wondered why it was "of course." "I suppose," she said aloud, "it 's 'of course' because of Lew. I feel as though I were sitting here years ahead, talking to Lew when his head will be turning gray."

"Do n't!" cried Leighton. "Do n't say that! Lew travels a different road."

Mrs. Leighton looked up, surprised at his tone.

"Perhaps you do n't see what we can see. Perhaps you do n't know what you have done for Lew."

"I have done nothing for Lew," said Leighton, quickly. "If anything has been done for Lew, it was done in the years when I was far from him in body, in mind, and in spirit. Lew would have been himself without me. It is doubtful whether he would have been himself without you. I—I do n't forget that."

CHAPTER XLVI

AT four o'clock Leighton sent for Silas.

"Take the team home, Silas," he said. "We 're going to walk. Come along, Lew."

"It 's awfully early, Dad," said Lew, with a protesting glance at the high sun.

"The next to the last thing a man learns in social finesse," said Leighton, "and the very last rule that reaches the brain of woman, is to say good-by while it 's still a shock to one's hosts."

"And it 's still a shock to-day," said Mrs. Leighton, smiling. "But you must n't quarrel with what your father 's said, Lew," she added. "He 's given you the key to the heart of 'Come again!' "

"As if Lew would ever need that!" cried Natalie.

Soon after leaving the house, Leighton struck off to the right and up. His step was not springy. His head hung low on his breast, and his fingers gripped nervously at the light stick he carried. He did not speak, and Lewis knew enough not to break that silence. They crossed a field, Leighton walking slightly ahead. He did not have to look up to lead the way.

Presently they came into a lane. It dipped off to the left, into the valley. It was bordered by low, gray stone walls. On its right hung a thick wood of second-growth trees—a New England wood, various beyond the variety of any other forest on earth. It breathed a mingled essence of faint odors. The fronds of the trees reached over and embowered the lane.

On the left the view was open to the valley by reason of a pasture. The low stone wall was topped by a snaky fence of split rails. They were so old, so gray, that they, too, seemed of stone. Beyond them sloped the meager pasture-land; brown, almost barren even in the youth of the year. It was strewn with flat, outcropping rocks. Here and there rose a mighty oak. A splotch of green marked a spring. Below the spring one saw the pale blush of laurel in early June.

Leighton stopped and prodded the road with his stick. Lewis looked down. He saw that his father's hand was trembling. His eyes wandered to a big stone that peeped from the loam in the very track of any passing wheel. The stone was covered with moss—old moss. It was a long time since wheels had passed that way.

Leighton walked on a few steps, and then paused again, his eyes fixed on a spot at the right of the lane where the old wall had tumbled and brought with it a tangled mass of fox-grape vine. He left the roadway

and sat on the lower wall, his back against a rail. He motioned to Lewis to sit down too.

"I have brought you here," said Leighton and stopped. His voice had been so low that Lewis had understood not a word. "I have brought you here," said Leighton again, and this time clearly, "to tell you about your mother."

Lewis restrained himself from looking at his father's face.

"Your mother's name," went on Leighton, "was Jeanette O'Reilly. She was a milk-maid. That is, she did n't have to milk the cows, but she took charge of the milk when it came into the creamery and did to and with it all the things that women do with milk. I only knew your mother when she was seventeen. No one seemed to know where Jeanette came from. Perhaps Aunt Jed knew. I think she did, but she never told. I never asked. To me Jeanette came straight from the hand of God.

"I have known many beautiful women, but since Jeanette, the beauty of women has not spoken to the soul of me. There is a beauty—and it was hers—that cries out, just as a still and glorious morning cries out, to the open windows of the soul. To me Jeanette was all sighing, sobbing beauty. Beauty did not rest upon her; it glowed through her. She alone was the prism

through which my eyes could look upon the Promised Land. I knew it, and so—I told my father.

"I was only a boy, not yet of age. My father never hesitated. All the power that law and tradition allowed he brought to bear. He forbade me to visit Aunt Jed's or to see Jeanette again. He gave me to understand that the years held no hope for me—that on the day I broke his command I would cut myself off from him and home. To clinch things, he sent me away to college a month early, and put me under a tutor.

"There is a love that forgets all else—that forgets honor. I forged a letter to the authorities and signed my father's name to it. It told them to send me back at once—that my mother was ill. I came back to these hills, but not home. Far back in the woods here William Tuck had a hut. He was a wood-cutter. He lived alone. He owed nothing to any man. Many a time we had shot and fished together. I came back to William.

"This lane does n't lead to Aunt Jed's. This land never belonged to her. Here we used to meet, Jeanette and I. You see the mass of fox-grape over yonder? In that day the wall had n't tumbled. It stood straight and firm. The fox-grape sprang from it and climbed in a great veil over the young trees. Behind that wall, in the cool dusk of the grapevine, we used to sit and laugh inside when a rare buggy or a wagon went by."

Leighton drew a long breath.

"I used to lie with my head in Jeanette's lap because it was the only way I could see her eyes. Her lashes were so long that when she raised them it was like the slow flutter of the wings of a butterfly at rest. She did not raise them often. She kept them down—almost against the soft round of her cheek—because—because, she said, she could dream better that way.

"How shall I tell you about her hair? I used to reach up and pull at it until it tumbled. And then, because Jeanette's hair never laughed except when it was the playmate of light, I used to drag her to her feet, across the wall, across the lane, down there to the flat rock just above the spring.

"There we would sit, side by side, and every once in a while look fearfully around, so public seemed that open space. But all we ever saw for our pains was a squirrel or perhaps a woodchuck looking around fearfully, too. Jeanette would sit with her hands braced behind her, her tumbled hair splashing down over her shoulders and down her back. The setting sun would come skipping over the hills and play in her hair, and Jeanette's hair would laugh—laugh out loud. And I —I would bury my face in it, as you bury your face in flowers, and wonder at the unshed tears that smarted in my eyes."

Leighton stopped to sigh. It was a quivering sigh

that made Lewis want to put out his hand and touch his father, but he was afraid to move. Leighton went on.

"Look well about you, boy. No wheel has jarred this silence for many a year—not since I bought the land you see and closed the road Man seldom comes here now,—only children in the fall of the year when the chestnuts are ripe. Jeanette liked children. She was never anything but a child herself. Look well about you, I say, for these still woods and fields, with God's free air blowing over them,—they were your cradle, the cradle of your being.

"It was Jeanette that made me go back to college when college opened, but months later it was William that sent for me when Jeanette was too weak to stop him. The term was almost over. Through all the winter I had never mentioned Jeanette to the folks at home, hoping that my father would let me come home for the summer and wander these hills unwatched. Now William wrote. I could n't make out each individual word, but the sum of what he tried to tell flew to my heart.

"Jeanette had disappeared from Aunt Jed's three months before. They had not found her, for they had watched for her only where I was. She had gone to William's little house. She had been hidden away there. While she was well enough, she had not let him send for me. There was panic in William's letter, for he

wrote that he would meet the first train by which I could come, and every other train thereafter.

"You heard William say the other day that he had never driven like that since—and there I stopped him. It was since the day I came back to Jeanette he was going to say. We did n't mind the horses breaking that day. Where the going was good, they ran because they felt like it; where it was bad, they ran because I made them. I asked William if he had a doctor, and he said he had. He had done more than that: he had married Mrs. Tuck to look after Jeanette.

"We stopped in the village for the parson. I was going to blurt out the truth to him, but William was wiser. He told him that some one was dying. So we got the old man between us, and I drove while William held him. He would have jumped out. He thought we were mad."

CHAPTER XLVII

LEIGHTON paused as he thought grimly over that ride. Then he went on:

"The last thing my father paid for out of his own pocket on my account was that team of horses from the livery stable. They got to William's all right, but they were broken—broken past repair. Poor beasts! Even so we were only just in time. The old parson married me to Jeanette. I would have killed him if he had hesitated. I did n't have to tell him so; he saw it.

"For one blessed moment Jeanette forgot pain and locked her arms about my neck. Then they pushed me out, and William and the parson with me. Mrs. Tuck and the doctor stayed in there. You were born." Leighton gripped his hands hard on his stick. "What—what was it the old woman—the fortune-teller—said?"

" 'Child of love art thou,' " repeated Lewis, in a voice lower than his father's. " 'At thy birth was thy mother rent asunder, for thou wert conceived too near the heart.' "

Leighton trembled as though with the ague. He nodded his head, already low sunk upon his breast.

"It was that—just that," he whispered. "They

called us in, the old preacher and me. Jeanette stayed just for a moment, her hand in mine, her eyes in mine, and then—she was gone. The old parson cried like a child. I wondered why he cried. Suddenly I knew, and my curses rose above his prayers. I sprang for William's rifle in the corner, and before they could stop me, I shot you.

"Boy, I shot to kill; but the best shot at a hundred yards will miss every time at a hundred inches. The bullet just grazed your shoulder, and at the sting of it you began to gasp and presently to cry. Years afterward the doctor told me you would never have lived to draw a single breath if it had n't been for that shot. The shock of it was what started your heart, your lungs. They had tried slapping, and it had n't done any good."

Leighton paused again before he went on in a dull voice.

"After that I can tell you what happened only from hearsay. Aunt Jed came and took you and what was left of Jeanette, your mother. Sometime you must stop in the churchyard down yonder under the steeple and look for a little slab that tells nothing—nothing except that Jeanette died a wife before the law and—and much beloved before God.

"They kept me at William's for days until I was in my right mind. The day they took me home was the day father paid for the horses—the day he died.

I do n't know if he would have forgiven me if he had lived. I never saw him again alive, after he knew. I 've often wondered. I would give a lot to know, even to-day, that he would have forgiven. But life is like that. Death strikes and leaves us blind—blind to some vital spring of love, could we but find it and touch it."

Lewis was young. Just to hear the burden that had lain so long upon his father's heart was too much for him. Not for nothing had Leighton lived beside his boy. There, under the still trees, their souls reached out and touched. Lewis dropped his head and arms upon his father's knees and sobbed. He felt as though his whole heart was welling up in tears.

Leighton's hand fell caressingly upon him. He did not speak until his boy had finished crying, then he said:

"I 've told you all this because you alone in all the world have a right to know, a right to know your full inheritance—the inheritance of a child of love."

Leighton paused.

"I never saw you again," he went on, "until that day when we met down there at the ends of the earth. Aunt Jed had sent you down there to hide you from me. Before she died she told me where you were and sent me to you. She need n't have told me to go after you.

"As you go on and meet a wider world, you will hear

strange things of your father. Believe them all, and then, if you can, still remember. Do n't waste love. That 's a prayer and a charge. I 've wasted a lot of life and self, but never a jot of love. Now go, boy. Tell them I 've stayed behind for supper."

Lewis did not hurry. When he reached the homestead, it was already late. Mrs. Tuck had kept their supper hot for them. When she saw Lewis come in alone, she rushed up to him with eager questions of his father. Lewis looked with new eyes upon her kindly anxious face.

"It 's all right," he said. "Dad stayed behind. He does n't want any supper."

Mrs. Tuck looked shrewdly at him, and then turned away.

"It ain't never all right," she said half to herself, "when a man full-grown do n't want his supper."

Lewis saw nothing more of his father that night. He tried to keep awake, but it was long after sleep had conquered him that Leighton came in. And during the days that followed he saw less and less of his father. Early in the morning Leighton would be up. He would eat, and then wander about the place listlessly with his cigar. His head hanging, he would wander farther and farther from the house until, almost without volition, he would suddenly strike off in a straight line across the hills.

Lewis would have noticed the desertion more had it not been for Natalie. Natalie claimed and held all his days. Together they walked and drove till Lewis had learned all the highways and byways that Natalie had long since discovered. She liked the byways best, and twice she drove through crowding brush to the foot of the lane that was barred.

"I 've often come here," she said, "and I 've even tried to pull those bars down, but they 're solider than they look. I 'm not strong enough. Will you help me some day? I want to follow that dear old mossy lane to its end, if it has one. It looks as if it led straight into the land of dreams."

"It probably does," said Lewis. "I 'll never help you pull down those bars, because, if you 've got any heart, you can look at them and see that whoever put them up owns that land of dreams, and there 's no land of dreams with room for more than two people, and they must be holding hands."

"You 've made me not want to go in there," said Natalie as she turned Gip around. "How could you see it like that? You 're not a woman."

Lewis did not answer, but when, two days later, they were out after strawberries, and Natalie led him through a wood in the valley to the foot of the pasture with the oaks and the spring, Lewis stopped her.

"Do n't let 's go up there, Nan," he said. "That 's

part of somebody else's land of dreams. Dad 's up there somewhere, I 'm sure."

Natalie looked at him, and he saw in her eyes that she knew all that he had not told in words.

CHAPTER XLVIII

LEIGHTON and Lewis made two business trips away from the homestead, and on both occasions, as soon as affairs permitted, hurried back with equal eagerness. Leighton tried to read significance into the fact that Lewis was not chafing at his absence from Folly, but he could not because Lewis wrote to Folly every week, and seemed to revel in telling her everything. Folly's answers were few and far between.

Leighton would have given much to see one of Folly's letters. He wondered if her maid wrote them for her. He used to watch Lewis reading them. They were invariably short—mere notes. Lewis would read each one several times to make it seem like a letter. He seemed to feel that his father would like to see one of the letters, and one day, to keep himself from calling himself coward, he impulsively handed one over.

Leighton read the scant three pages slowly. It was as though Folly had reached across the sea to scratch him again, for the note was well written in a bold, round hand. It was short because Folly combined the wisdom of the serpent with the voice of a dove. She knew the limits of her shibboleth of culture, and never

passed them. She said only the things she had learned to write correctly. They were few.

The few weeks at the homestead had changed Leighton. A single mood held him—a mood that he never threw off with a toss of his head. He seemed to have lost his philosophy of cheerfulness at the word of command. Lewis was too absorbed in his long days with Natalie to notice it, but Nelton took it upon himself to open his eyes.

"Larst month," he said, "you and the governor was brothers. Now persons do n't have to ask me is he your father. It 's written in his fyce. It 's this country life as has done it. Noisy, I calls it. No rest."

Lewis felt penitent. He suggested to Leighton a day together, a tramp and a picnic, but Leighton shook his head.

"I do n't want to have to talk," he said bluntly.

"Dad," said Lewis, "let 's go away."

Leighton started as though the words were something he had too long waited for.

"Go away?" he repeated. How often had he said, "To go away is the sovereign cure." "Yes," he went on, "I believe you are right. I think it 's high time—past time—for me to clear. Will you come or stay?"

"I 'll come if it 's London," said Lewis, smiling.

"London first, of course," said Leighton, gravely.

"To-day is Tuesday. Say we start on Thursday. That gives us a day to go over and say good-by."

"One day is n't enough," said Lewis. "Make it two."

"All right," agreed Leighton.

For that afternoon Lewis and Natalie had planned a long tramp, but before they had gone a mile from Aunt Jed's a purling brook in the depths of a still wood raised before them an impassable barrier of beauty. By a common, unspoken consent they sat down beside the gurgling water. They talked much and were silent much.

For the first time Lewis had something in mind which he was afraid to tell to Natalie. He was not afraid for her. It was a selfish fear. He was afraid for himself—afraid to tell her that two short days would close the door for them on childhood. He wondered that mere years had been powerless to close that door. He looked on Natalie, and knew that renunciation would be hard.

Natalie had tossed aside her hat. She sat leaning against the crisp trunk of a silver birch. Her hands were in her lap. Her dress was crumpled up, displaying her crossed feet and the tantalizing line of her slim ankles. Against the copper green of the tree trunk the mass of her hair was pressed, gold upon the shadow of gold. Her moist lips were half open. Her eyes were away, playing with memory.

"Bet you can't tell me the first thing you ever said to me," said Lewis.

"My dwess is wumpled," said Natalie, promptly, a single dimple coming and going with her sudden smile. Then she looked down and blushed. She straightened out her skirt, and patted it in place. They looked at each other and laughed.

"Do you remember what came after that?" said Lewis, teasingly. "We kissed each other."

Natalie nodded.

"Nat," said Lewis, "do you remember any kiss after that one?"

"No," said Natalie.

"Funny," said Lewis. "I do n't either. Do you want me to kiss you when it comes to saying good-by?"

Natalie turned a wide and questioning look on him.

"No," she said in a tone he had never heard from her before.

Lewis sank back upon one elbow. He had been on the point of telling her that good-by was only two days off. Her tone stopped him. "Do you remember the night of the sunset?" he asked, instead.

Natalie nodded.

"I said I was going to sail to the biggest island. You said you were, too, and I said you could n't because you were littlest. Do you remember?"

Natalie sank her head slowly in assent. Her lower

lip trembled. Suddenly she laughed and sprang to her feet.

"Come on," she cried, "or we 'll be late for supper. I 'll beat you to the fence." She was off with a rush, but Lewis got to the fence first. He helped her over with mock ceremony. When they came to a wall farther on he helped her over again. This helping Natalie over obstacles was something new. It gave him faint twinges of pleasure.

They came to the foot of the pasture at the back of the house and to the last wall of all. "Come on," said Lewis, smiling and holding out his hand.

"Not this time, silly," said Natalie. "Do n't you see the bars are down?"

"Yes, I see," said Lewis, springing into the open gap in the wall, "but you 're not coming through here. You 're going over."

"Am I?" said Natalie, and rushed at him.

With one arm he caught her around the waist and threw her back. She landed on all fours, like a cat. Then, laughing, she sprang up and came at him again, only to be hurled back once more. Lewis was laughing, too, laughing at this last romp in the name of childhood. Natalie was so strong, so supple, that he handled her roughly without fear of hurting her. They both felt the joy of strength and battle and exulted. Four times Natalie stormed the breach, and four times was

she hurled back. Then she stood, panting, and holding her sides, the blood rioting in her cheeks, and fire in her eyes.

"Give up?" asked Lewis.

Natalie shook her head.

"We 'll be late for supper."

"I do n't care," said Natalie. "I 'll never give up; only I 'm cold." She shivered.

"Cold, Nat?" cried Lewis. "Here." He started to take off his thick tweed coat. At the exact moment when his arms were imprisoned in the sleeves, Natalie shot by him. She held her skirts above her knees and ran.

Long was the chase before Lewis caught her. He threw his arms around her and held her. Natalie did not struggle.

"You can't carry me back," she gasped. "It 's too far." Then suddenly from her eyes a woman looked out—a woman Lewis did not know. His arms dropped to his sides. He felt the blood pumping in his heart—his heart that had been pressed but now against the breast of this strange unknown. By one impulse they turned from each other and walked silently to the house. They were strangers.

CHAPTER XLIX

THAT evening when Natalie was driving him home Lewis told her that to-morrow was good-by. Gip, as usual, was holding Natalie's attention so that she could scarcely pay heed to what Lewis was saying. But the central fact that he and Leighton were going hung in her mind and sank in slowly, so that when they got to the homestead she could say quite evenly:

"Shall we see you again?"

"Of course," said Lewis, "Dad and I will come over to say good-by."

"Come for supper," said Natalie. "I won't be home in the morning. Good night."

Lewis walked slowly to the house. Natalie had not given him time to ask why she would not be at home in the morning. He grudged giving that morning to any foreign interest. He wondered what he could do to kill all that time alone.

The next afternoon he and Leighton drove over to Aunt Jed's in state. Leighton was still held by his mood—a mood that was not morose so much as distant. Lewis himself was in no good humor. The morning had palled on him even more than he had feared. Now

he felt himself chilled when he longed to be warmed. Where his spirit cried out for sunshine, his father's mood threw only shadow. How tangible and real a thing was that shadow he never realized until they reached Aunt Jed's and found that it had got there before them.

Despite mammy's art, the supper was a sad affair. It was not the sadness of close-knitted hearts about to part that seized upon the company. Love can thrive on the bitter-sweet of that pain. It was a deeper sadness—the sadness that in evil hours seizes upon the individual soul and says: "You stand alone. From this desert place of the mind you can flee by the road of any trifling distraction, but into it no companion ever enters. You stand alone." "I myself," cries the soul of man, and recoils from that brink of infinite distance. Such was the mood that Leighton had imposed on those he touched that day, for, while he could take no company into his desert place, by simply going there he could drive the rest each to his far wilderness.

After supper they sat long in a silence without communion. It became unbearable. In such an hour bodily nearness becomes a repulsion. Lewis rebelled. He looked indignantly at Natalie. She too was young. Why did not her youth revolt? But Natalie was n't feeling young that night. She did not answer his look.

"Dad," said Lewis, "I think we 'd better go. We have to make an early start."

"All right," said Leighton, listlessly. "Tell Silas."

Lewis rose and turned to Natalie.

"Are n't you coming?" he asked.

Natalie got up slowly, and drew a filmy white scarf —a cloud, she called it—about her shoulders. There seemed an alien chill in the air.

As they walked toward the barn, a memory that had been playing hide-and-seek with Lewis's mind throughout the evening suddenly met him full in the face of thought. He stopped and stared at Natalie. She was dressed in red. What was it they had called that birthday dress of long ago? Accordion silk. The breeze caught Natalie's skirt and played with it, opening out the soft pleats and closing them again. The breeze seized upon the ends of the cloud and lifted them fitfully as though they were wings too tired for full flight.

"Nat," whispered Lewis, "You remember the night I left Nadir. Is it the same dress?"

"Silly," said Natalie, smiling faintly. "I 've grown ten inches since then."

Lewis reached out slowly and took her hands. How he remembered that good-by, every bit of it! Natalie's hands gripping his shoulders, his arms about her twitching, warm body, his face buried in her fragrant hair! But to-night her hands were cold and trembling to with-

drawal. He felt withdrawal in her whole body, so close to him, so far away. Why was she so far away? Suddenly he remembered yesterday—the moment when the stranger woman had looked out at him from Natalie's eyes. She was far away because they two had traveled far from childhood.

His own hands were hot. They were eager to seize Natalie, to drag himself back, and her with him, into childhood's land of faith. But he knew he had not the strength for that. He had only the strength to drop her cold hands and to turn and shout for Silas.

On the way home Lewis plunged rebelliously against his father's mood.

"Dad," he said, "do you think Natalie belongs to the Old Guard?"

"The Old Guard?" repeated Leighton, vacantly. Then a gleam of light dawned in his eyes. "Your little pal—the Old Guard. No, she does n't belong in the way of a recruit; she has n't joined the ranks. Do you want to know why? Because, boy, your little pal and women like her are the foundation, the life's blood, of the Old Guard. She does n't have to join. She is, was, and always will be the Old Guard itself. In her single heart she holds the seven worlds of women."

"But, Dad," said Lewis, half turning in his seat,

"you do n't know Natalie. You 've never once talked to her."

Leighton shrugged his shoulders.

"I 've met lots of men that know God; I 've never seen one that could prove him. I know Natalie better —better——" Then suddenly his mind trailed off to its desert place. He would speak no more that night.

The next day they were off. Action and movement brought a measure of relief from the very start. Leighton glanced almost eagerly from the windows of the hurrying train, watching for the sudden turn and the new view. There remained in his eyes, however, a desperate question. Was "going away" still the sovereign cure?

At New York a cable awaited him. He opened it, read it, and turned bruskly to Lewis.

"I 'm not going to London," he said. "I 'm going to Naples direct. Old Ivory will wait for me there. You 'll be going to London, I suppose."

For the first time Lewis felt far away from his father. He flushed. He felt like crying, because it came upon him suddenly that he was far away from his father, that they had been traveling different roads for many days. Pride came to his aid.

"Yes," he said, steadily, "I shall go to London."

Leighton nodded and turned to Nelton. He gave him a string of rapid orders, to which Nelton answered

with his frequent and unfailing: "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Wait here," said Leighton. "I 'm going to answer this."

He hurried away, and Lewis, feeling unaccountably tired, sat down on a divan. Nelton remained on guard beside the bags, repulsing the attacks of too anxious bell-boys. To him came a large, heavy-faced person, pensively plying a toothpick.

"Say, young feller," he said, "how much do you get?"

Nelton stared, dumfounded, at the stranger.

"How much do I get?" he stammered.

"Yep, just that," said the stranger. "What 's your pay?"

Nelton's face turned a brick red. He glared steadily into the stranger's eyes, but said nothing.

"Well, well, never mind the figure if you 're ashamed of it," said the stranger, calmly. "This is my offer. If you 'll shake your boss and come to me, I 'll double your pay every year so long as you stick to that 'Yes, sir, thank you, sir,' talk and manner. What do you say? Is it a deal?"

"What do I s'y?" repeated Nelton, licking his lips. Lewis, grinning on the lounge, was eavesdropping with all his ears.

"H—m—m," said the stranger, "double your pay every year *if you keep it up.*"

"I s'y this," said Nelton, a slight tremble in his voice, "I 've been serving gentlemen so long that I do n't think we 'd hit it off together, thank you."

The stranger's shrewd eyes twinkled, but he was otherwise unmoved.

"Perhaps you 're right," he mumbled, still plying his toothpick. "Anyway, I 'm glad you 're not a worm." He drew a large business card from his pocket and held it out. "Come to me if you ever want a man's job."

Nelton took the card and held it out as though he had been petrified in the act. His bulging eyes watched the stranger as he sauntered leisurely back to his seat, then they turned to Lewis.

"What do you think of that?" they asked.

Lewis held out his hand for the card and glanced at the name.

"Nelton," he said, "you 've made a mistake. Better go over and tell the old boy you 've reconsidered his proposition. I 'll fix it up with dad. You 'll be able to retire in three years."

"Master Lewis," said Nelton, gravely, "there 's lots of people besides you and the governor that thinks we serving-men says 'Yes, sir, thank you, sir,' to any one for the syke of a guinea a week and keep. Now you and the stout party eating the toothpick over yonder knows better."

CHAPTER L

ON the following day, while Leighton and Lewis were sorting out their things and Nelton was packing, Leighton said:

"Nelton, you 'd better go back to London with Mr. Lewis."

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Nelton from the depths of a trunk, "but I 'd like to go with you, sir."

"Where to?" asked Leighton, surprised. "Africa?"

"Yes, sir, Africa, sir."

Leighton paused for a moment before he said:

"Nelton, you can't go to Africa, not as a serving-man. You would n't be useful and you would n't be comfortable. Africa 's a queer place, the cradle of slavery and the land of the free. A place," he continued, half to himself, "where masters become men. They are freed from their servants by the law that says white shall not serve white while the black looks on lest he be amazed that the gods should wait upon each other."

He turned back to Nelton and added with a smile that was kindly:

"What would you do in a land where just to be white spells kingship—a kingship held by the power to stand up to your thirty miles a day, to bear hunger and thirst without whimpering, to stand steady in danger, and to shoot straight and keep clean always? It 's a land where all the whites sit down to the same table, but it is n't every white that can get to the table. You must n't think I 'm picking on you, Nelton. The man that 's going with me is always hard up, but I heard him refuse an offer of Lord Dubbley's of all expenses and a thousand pounds down to take him on a trip."

"Lord Dubbley!" repeated Nelton, impressed. "Is there anything w'at a lord can't 'ave?"

"Yes," said Leighton. "There are still tables you can't sit down at for just money or name, but they are getting further and further away."

"Mr. Lewis Leighton and servant" attracted considerable attention on the *Laurentia,* but let it be said to Lewis's credit, or, rather, to the credit of his abstraction, that he did not notice it. Never before had Lewis had so much to think about. His parting with his father ought to have been more than a formality. Why had it been a mere incident—an incident scarcely salient among the happenings of a busy day? As he looked back, Lewis began to see that it was not yesterday or the day before that he had parted from his father. When was it, then? Suddenly it came upon

him that their real farewell had been said in that still, deserted lane overlooking his father's land of dreams.

The realization depressed him. He did not know why. He did not know that the physical partings in this world are as nothing compared with those divisions of the spirit that come to us unawares, that are never seen in anticipation, but are known all too poignantly when, missing from beside us some long familiar soul, we look back and see the parting of the ways.

Then there was another matter that had come to puzzle his inexperience. He knew nothing of his father's theory that there is no erotic affection that can stand a separation of six months in conjunction with six thousand miles. To youth erotic affection is non-existent; all emotional impulse is love. Along this road the race would have come to utter marital disaster long ago were it not for the fact that youth takes in a new impulse with every breath.

In certain aspects Lewis had the maturity of his age. People who looked at him saw a man, not a boy. But there was a shy and hidden side of him that was very young indeed. He was one of those men in whom youth is inherent, a legion that cling long to dreams and are ever ready to stand and fall by some chosen illusion. Reason can not rob them of God, nor women rob them of woman.

To Lewis's youth had come a new impulse so en-

tangled with contact with Hélène, with Leighton, and with Natalie that he could not quite define it. He only knew that it had pushed Folly back in his vision—so far back that his mind could not fasten upon and hold her in the place to which he had given her a right. The realization troubled him. He worried over it, but comforted himself with the thought that once his eyes could feast again upon her living self, she would blot out, as before, all else in life.

He should have arrived in London on Saturday night, but a heavy fog held the steamer to the open sea over night, and it was only late on Sunday morning that he disembarked at Plymouth. Well on in the afternoon he reached town and rushed to the flat for a wash and a change before seeking Folly.

Eager to taste the pleasures of surprising the lady of his choice, he had sent her no word of his coming, and as a consequence he found her apartment empty—empty for him, for Folly was not in. Marie opened the door, and after a few gasping words of welcome told him that Folly had just gone out, that she was driving in the park; but would n't he come in and wait?

At first he said "Yes," but his impatience did not let him even cross the threshold. It drove him out to the park with the assurance that it was better to hunt for a needle in a haystack than to sit down and wait for the needle to crawl out to him. For a while he stood

at a point of vantage and watched the long procession of private motor-cars and carriages, but he watched in vain. Depressed, he started to walk, and his mood carried him away from the throng.

He was walking head down when a lonely carriage standing by the curb drew his eye. At first he thought desire had deceived his senses. The equipage looked very like Folly's smart little victoria, but it was empty, and the man on the box was a stranger. Lewis approached him doubtfully. "Is this Miss Delaires's carriage?" he asked.

The man looked him over before he answered:

"Yes, sir."

"Where is Miss Delaires?" asked Lewis, his face brightening.

"Doin' 'er mile," replied the coachman.

Lewis waved his hand toward a path to the right questioningly. The man nodded. Feeling suddenly young again, Lewis hurried along the path with a long and eager stride. He had not gone far when he saw a dainty figure, grotesquely accompanied by a ragamuffin, coming toward him. He did not have to ask himself twice if the dainty figure was Folly's. If he had been blind, the singing of the blood in his veins would have spelled her name.

He stepped behind a screening bush and waited to spring out at her. His eyes fastened curiously upon

the ragamuffin. He could see that he was speaking to Folly, and that she was paying no regard to him. Presently Lewis could hear what he was saying:

"Aw, naow, lydy, give us a penny, won't cher?"

"I won't," replied Folly, sharply. "I said I would n't, and I won't. I 'll give you up to the first officer we come to, though, if you do n't clear."

"Ah, ga-arn!" said the youth, whose head scarcely reached to Folly's waist. "Course you won't give me no penny. *You* ain't no lydy."

Folly stopped in her tracks. Her face went suddenly livid with rage.

"No lydy!" she cried in the most directly expressive of all idioms. "If I was n't a *perfect* lydy, I 'd slap your blankety blank little blank."

At each word of the virile repartee of Cockneydom coming so incongruously from those soft lips, Lewis's heart went down and down in big, jolting bumps. Scarcely aware of what he was doing, he stepped out into the path. Folly looked up and saw him. The look of amazement in his face, eyes staring and mouth open and gulping, struck and held her for a second before she realized who it was that stood before her.

For just the fraction of a moment longer she was frightened and puzzled by Lewis's dumfounded mien; then her mind harked back for the clue and got it. No one had to tell her that the game was up so far as Lewis

was concerned. She knew it. Her face suddenly crinkled up with mirth. With a peal of laughter, she dodged him and ran improperly for her very proper little turnout. He did not follow except with his eyes.

"Larfin' at *us,* governor," jibed the diminutive cockney, putting a rail between himself and Lewis. "The 'uzzy! The minute I lays my heye on that marm, I says, 'Blime yer, *you* ain't no lydy'! I say, governor, give us a penny."

Lewis turned away and took a few steps gropingly, head down, as though he walked in a trance. Presently he stopped and came back, feeling with finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket. He drew out a gold coin, looked at it gravely, and flipped it across the rail at the ragamuffin. Then he turned and walked off with a rapid stride.

The little cockney snatched at the coin, and popped it into his mouth. Too overwhelmed to speak his gratitude, he stood on his head until Lewis was out of sight. It was the first time in his life that he had handled, much less possessed, a "thick un."

CHAPTER LI

THE expert surgeon, operating for blindness on the membranes of the eye, is denied the bulwark of an anesthetic. Such a one will tell you that the moment of success is the moment most pregnant with disaster. To the patient who has known only the fraction of life that lies in darkness, the sudden coming of light is a miracle beyond mere resurrection from the dead. But he is warned he must avoid any spasm of joy. Should he cry out and start at the coming of the dawn, in that moment he bids farewell forever to the light of day.

Something of this shock of sudden sight had come to Lewis, but it came to him with no spasm of joy. A man who has been drugged does not awake to joy, but to pain. Liberation and suffering too often walk hand in hand. Lewis had felt no bondage; consequently his freedom was as terrible as it was sudden. It plunged him into depths of depression he had never before sounded.

From the park he went mechanically to the flat, and sat for hours by the window looking out upon the dead Sunday gray of London. Darkness came, and with it

Nelton and lights. Nelton remarked that there was nothing to eat in the house.

"I know," said Lewis, and sat on, too abject to dress and go out for dinner. In his depression his thoughts turned naturally to his father. He thought of joining him, and searched time-tables and sailings, only to find that he could not catch up with the expedition. Besides, as he looked back on their last days in America, he doubted whether his father would have welcomed his coming.

The next few days were terrible indeed, for Lady Derl, as he had feared, was out of town. He wrote to her, begging her to let him know where she was and when she would come to London. For three days he waited for an answer, and then the emptiness of the whole world, the despair of isolation, drove him to his studio and to work.

He had had an impulse to write to Natalie, even to go to her; but there was a fineness in his nature that stopped him, a shame born of the realization of his blindness and of the pity in which Hélène and Leighton and perhaps even Natalie must have held him.

Suddenly the full import of Hélène's intimate sacrifice in the disrobing of the palpitating sorrow of her life and of his father's immolation of his land of dreams struck him. They had done these things to make him see, and he had remained blind. They had struck

the golden chords of the pæan of mighty love, and he had clung, smiling and unhearing, to his penny whistle.

For the first time, and with Folly farther away than ever before, he saw her as she was. Once he had thought that she and youth were inseparable, that Folly *was* youth. Now, in the power of sudden vision, he saw as his father had seen all along, that Folly was as old as woman, that she had never been young.

These things did not come to Lewis in a single day, but in long hours of work spread over many weeks. He was laboring at a frieze, a commission that had come to him through Le Brux, and upon which he had done considerable work before going to America. What he had done had not been altogether pleasing to his father. Lewis had felt it, though Leighton had said little beyond damning it to success.

Now Lewis saw the beginning he had made through his father's eyes. He saw the facile riot and exaggerations of youth, and contrasted their quick appeal to a hurried age with the modesty of the art that hides behind the vision and reveals itself not to an age or to ages, but in the long, slow measure of life everlasting. He undid all but the skeleton of what he had done, and on the bare frame built the progression of repressed beauty which was to escape the glancing eye only to find a long abiding-place in the hearts of those who worship seldom, but worship long.

At last he got word from Hélène. His letter had followed her to the Continent and from there to Egypt. She wrote that she was tired of travel, and was coming home. In a postscript she mentioned a glimpse of Leighton at Port Said. Lewis was impatient to see her. He had begun to know his liberation.

The revelation that had come to him in the park was not destined to stand alone. Between such women as Folly and their victims exists an almost invariable camaraderie that forbids the spoiling of sport. The inculcation of this questionable loyalty is considered by some the last attribute of the finished adventuress, and by others it is said to be due to the fact that such women draw and are drawn by men whose major rule is to "play fair." Both conclusions are erroneous, as any victim can testify.

The news that Lewis no longer followed in Folly's train permeated his world with a rapidity that has no parallel outside of London except in the mental telegraphy of aboriginal Africa. Men soon began to talk to him, to tell him things. He turned upon the first with an indignant question, "Why did n't you tell me this before?" and the informer stared at him and smiled until Lewis found the answer for himself and flushed. Ten thousand pointing fingers cannot show the sunrise to the blind.

By the time Hélène came back, Lewis not only knew

his liberation, but had begun to bless Folly as we bless the stroke of lightning that strikes at us and just misses. He complied with Hélène's summons promptly, but with a deliberation that surprised him, for it was not until he was on the way to her house that he realized that he had no troubles to pour out to her ear.

Nevertheless, a sense of peace fell upon him as he entered the familiar room of cheerful blue chintzes and light. Hélène was as he had ever known her. She gave him a slow, measuring welcome, and then sat back and let him talk. Woman's judgment may err in clinging to the last word, but never is her finesse at fault in ceding the first.

Hélène heard Lewis's tale from start to finish with only one interruption. It took her five minutes to find out just what it was Folly had said in her own tongue to the little cockney in his, and even at that there were one or two words she had to guess. When she thought she had them all, she sat up straight and laughed.

Lewis stared at her.

"Do you think it 's funny?" he demanded.

"Oh, no, of course not," gasped Lady Derl, trying to gulp down her mirth. "Not at all." And then she laughed again.

Lewis waited solemnly for her to finish, then he told her of some of the things he had heard at the club.

"Hélène," he finished, "I want you to know that I

do n't only see what a fool I was. I see more than that. I see what you and dad sacrificed to my blindness. I want you to know that you did n't do it in vain. Six months ago, if I had found Folly out, I would have gone to the dogs, taken her on her own terms, and said good-by to honor and my word to dad. It 's—it 's from that that you have saved me."

Hélène waved her hand deprecatingly.

"I did little enough for you, Lew. Not half what I would willingly have done. But—but your dad—I wrote you I 'd seen him just for an hour at Port Said. Your dad, Lew, he 's given you all he had."

"What do you mean?" asked Lewis, troubled.

"Nothing," said Hélène, her thoughts wandering; "nothing that telling will show you." She turned back to him and smiled. "Let 's talk about your pal Natalie. We 're great friends."

"Friends?" said Lewis. "Have you been writing to her?"

"Oh, no," said Hélène. "Women do n't have to know each other to be friends."

"Why, there 's nothing more to tell about Natalie," said Lewis.

Hélène looked him squarely in the eyes.

"Tell me honestly," she said; "have n't you wanted to go back to Natalie?"

Lewis flushed. He rose and picked up his hat and stick.

"'You can give a new hat to a king, but it is n't everybody that will take your cast-off clothes.' That 's one of dad's, of course."

CHAPTER LII

THROUGH that winter Lewis worked steadily forward to a goal that he knew his father could not cavil at. He knew it instinctively. His grasp steadied to expression with repression, or, as one of his envious, but honest, competitors put it, genius had bowed to sanity.

It is usual to credit these rebirths in individual art to some great grief, but no great grief had come to Lewis. His work fulfilled its promise in just such measure as he had fulfilled himself. In as much as he had matured, in so much had his art. Man is not ripened by a shock, but by those elements that develop him to the point of feeling and knowing the shock when it comes to him. In a drab world, drab would have been Lewis's end; but, little as he realized it, his world had not been drab.

Three steady, but varying, lights had shone upon him. The influence of Natalie, as soft and still as reflected light; of Hélène, worldly before the world, but big of heart; and of Leighton, who had been judged in all things that he might judge, had drawn Lewis up above his self-chosen level, given sight to his eyes, and

reduced Folly to the proportions of a little final period to the paragraph of irresponsible youth.

To maturity Lewis had added a gravity that had come to him with the realization that in distancing himself from youth he had also unwittingly drawn away from the hearts that had done most toward bringing him emancipation. He had no psychological turn of mind. He could not penetrate the sudden reserve that had fallen upon his father or the apparent increasing distraction with which Hélène met his visits. He did not know that it is in youth and in age that hearts attain their closest contact and that the soul that finds itself, generally does so in solitude.

He was hurt by the long silence of his father—a silence unbroken now in months, and by Hélène's withdrawal, which was marked enough to make him prolong the intervals between his visits to her, and baffled him on those rare occasions when they met.

His life became somber and, as lightning comes only to clouds, so to his clouded skies came the flash and the blow of a letter from Africa. It was not from his father, but from Old Ivory. He found it on the breakfast table and started to open it, but some premonition arrested him. He laid it aside, tried to finish his meal, and failed. A thickness in his throat would not let him eat. He left the table and went into the living-room, closing the door behind him.

He opened the letter and read the first few words, then he sat and stared for many a long minute into the fire, the half-crumpled sheets held tightly in his hand.

Nelton opened the door.

"Excuse me, sir," he said; "you have an engagement at ten."

"Break it by telephone," said Lewis. "Do n't come in again unless I ring. I 'm out if anybody calls."

When Nelton had closed the door, Lewis spread the letter on his knee and read:

DEAR LEW:

All is well with your dad at last. I'm a poor hand to talk and a poorer to write, for my finger is crooked to hold a trigger, not a pen. But he gave me it to do. Do n't take it too hard that a man with only plain words is blunt. Your father is gone.

I do n't have to tell you that in the last few weeks before he left you your dad grew old. He's grown old before, but never as old as that. The other times, the mere sight and smell of Africa started his blood again. But this time he stayed old—until to-day.

To-day we were out after elephant, and your dad had won the toss for first shot. We had n't gone a mile from camp when a lone bull buffalo crossed the trail, and your dad tried for him—a long, quick shot. The bullet only plowed his rump. The bull charged up the wind straight for us, and before the thunder of him got near enough to drown a shout, your dad yelled out "He's mine, Ive! He's mine!"

I held my fire, God help me; so did your dad—held it till the bull had passed the death-line. You know with charg-

ing buffalo there's more to stop than just life. There's weight and momentum and there's a rage that no other, man or beast, can equal.

Your dad got him—got him with the perfect shot,—but not before the bull had passed the death-line. And so, dear boy, they broke even, a life for a life. And your dad was glad. With the bones of his body crushed to a pulp, he could smile as I 've never seen him smile before. He pulled me down close to him and he said: "Bury me here—right here, Ive, and tell my boy I stopped to take on a side-tracked car. That 's a part of our language. He 'll understand."

Lewis's eyes went blind over his father's words, his father's message. "Tell my boy I stopped to take on a side-tracked car." Half across the world those words carried him back and back over half of life to a rattling train, a boy, and the wondrous stranger, speaking: "Every man who goes through the stress of life has need of an individual philosophy . . . Life to me is like this train; a lot of sections and a lot of couplings . . . Once in a while your soul looks out of the window and sees some long-forgotten, side-tracked car beckoning to be coupled on again. If you try to go back and pick it up, you 're done."

Not in Africa had his father stopped to take on a side-tracked car, but on a day that was already months ago when, standing in a still, deserted lane, he turned to face forever that moment of his life that had nearest touched divinity.

Lewis sat pondering for hours. It was not grief he

was feeling so much as an immeasurable loss. One grieves at death when it seems futile, when it robs youth or racks old age, when it devastates hopes or wrecks a vision. But death had not come so to his father. It had come as a fulfilment. Lewis knew instinctively that thus and thus only would his father have wished to strike into the royal road.

But the loss seized upon his heart and made it ache. He thought despondently, as which one of us has not, face to face with the fact of death, of things undone and of words unsaid. How cruel seemed their last hurried farewell, how hard that his father could not have known that his sacrifice had told for his boy's liberty, that his wisdom had rightly seen the path his art must follow to its land of promise! "Hard for you—only for you," whispered the voice of his new-found maturity.

It was natural that with reaction should come to Lewis a desire to talk, to seek comfort and sympathy, and it was natural that he should turn to Hélène. He walked slowly to her house. The doorman turned from him to pick up a note from the hall table. He handed it to Lewis.

"Her ladyship is not in, sir, to-day. Her ladyship told me to give you the note when you called."

Lewis took the note and walked out. He opened it absently and read:

Lew darling, I have heard. They will tell you that I am out. I'm not out, but I am broken. I cannot let you see me. Dear, I have given you all that I had to give.

He stood stock-still and read the words again, then he raised his eyes and looked slowly about him. Street, faces, trees, walls, and towers faded from his view. He stood in the midst of an illimitable void. A terror of loneliness fell upon him. He felt as though his full heart must speak or break, but in all his present world there was no ear to hear. Suddenly the impulse of a lifetime, often felt, seldom answered, came to him with an insistence that would not be denied. Go to Natalie. Tell Natalie.

CHAPTER LIII

SPRING was in the very act of birth when Lewis found himself once more in the old carryall threading the River Road. This time he sat beside Old William, and the horses plodded along slowly, tamed by the slack reins lying neglected on their backs. Old William was not driving. His hands, loosely holding the lines, lay on his knees. Down his pink cheeks and into his white beard crawled tears from his wide blue eyes.

"Glen dead! Little Glen Leighton dead!" he said aloud from time to time, and Lewis knew himself forgotten. He forgave the old man for the sake of the picture he conjured—a picture of that other boyhood when "little Glen Leighton" and the wood-cutter had hunted and fished and roamed these crowding hills together.

The next day was one of pouring showers. Twice Lewis left the house, only to be turned back by the rain. He was not afraid of getting wet, but he was afraid of having to talk to Natalie indoors. He could not remember ever having talked to her hemmed in by four walls.

But on the morrow he awoke to clean-washed skies and a fuzzy pale-green carpet that spread across the fields and rose in bumps and mounds over trees and budding shrubs. He left the homestead early, and struck out for Aunt Jed's. As he approached the house, a strange diffidence fell upon him. He was afraid to go in. For an hour he sat on the top rail of a fence and watched.

At last Natalie came out. She started to walk toward him, but presently turned to the right. Lewis followed her. At first she walked fast, but soon she began to pause beside some burst of green or tempting downy mass of pussy-willow, as though she were in two minds whether to fill her arms and rush back, carrying spring into the house or to go on. She went on slowly until she reached the barrier of rails that closed the entrance to Leighton's land of dreams. Here Lewis came up with her.

"Nat," he said, "shall I help you over?"

Natalie whirled round at the sound of his voice. Just for a second there was fright in her eyes; then color mounted swiftly into her pale cheeks, and her lips opened to speak, but she said nothing. There was something in Lewis's face that stopped her—a look of age and of hunger. She wanted to ask him why he had come back, but her heart was beating so fast that she dared not trust her voice.

Lewis was frightened, too. He was frightened lest he should find the strange woman when he needed just the oldest pal he had in the world.

"Nat," he blurted out, "dad is dead."

When a man thinks he is being clumsy and tactless with a woman, he is generally making a master stroke. At Lewis's words, so simple, so child-like, the conscious flush died from Natalie's cheeks, her heart steadied down, and her eyes filled with the sudden tears of sympathy.

"Dead, Lew? Your dad dead?"

She put her arms around him and kissed him softly; then she drew him to a low rock. They sat down side by side.

"Tell Natalie," she said.

Lewis could never remember that hour with Natalie except as a whole. Between the bursting of a dam and the moment when the pent-up waters stretch to their utmost level and peace there is no division of time. He knew only that it was like that with him. He had come in oppression, he had found peace.

Then he looked up into Natalie's speaking face and knew that he had found more. He had found again his old pal. "A pal is one who can't do wrong who can't go wrong, who can't grow wrong." Who had said that? Hélène—Hélène, who, never having seen Natalie save with the inner vision, knew her for a friend. To Folly

his body had cried, "Let us stay young together!" To Natalie his blood, his body, and his soul were ready to cry out, "Let us grow old together!"

Natalie had not followed the turn of his emotion. She broke in upon his thought and brought him back.

"I never talked to your dad, but—we knew each other, we liked each other."

Lewis started.

"That 's funny," he said.

"Is it?" said Natalie. "I suppose it sounds odd, but——"

"No," interrupted Lewis, "that 's not what I mean. It 's odd because Hélène said just the same thing about you. She said you were great friends—that women did n't have to know each other to be friends."

"They do n't have to know men to be friends, either," said Natalie, "unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless they love them. If they love them, they 've got to know them through and through to be friends. Love twists a woman's vision. Lots of women are ruined because they can't wait to see through and through."

"Why, Nat," said Lewis, "you 're talking like dad. Dad never talks—talked—without turning on the light."

"Does n't he?" said Natalie.

Lewis nodded.

"There are people that think of dad as a bad man.

He has told me so. But he was n't bad to me or to Hélène or Nelton or Old William, and we 're the ones that knew him best."

For a time they were silent, then Natalie said: "Lew, you 're older than you ever were before. Is it just losing your dad?"

Lewis shook his head.

"No," he said, "it was n't that. I finished growing up just after I got back to London. I 'm not the only thing that has grown. My work—sometime I 'll show you my work before and after. I wish I could have shown it to dad,—I wish I could have told him that I 've said good-by to Folly."

"Good-by to Folly?" cried Natalie, with a leap of the heart. Then her heart sank back. "You mean you 've said good-by to foolishness, to childish things?"

"Both," said Lewis. "Folly Delaires and childish things."

"Why?" asked Natalie, shortly.

"Because," said Lewis, "it was given me to see her through and through."

"And now?" breathed Natalie, drawing slightly away from him lest he hear the thumping of her heart.

Lewis turned his head and looked at her. The flush was back in her cheeks, her eyes were wide and staring far away, her moist lips were half open, and her bosom

rose and fell in the long, halting swell of tremulous breath.

There is a beauty that transcends the fixed bounds of flesh, that leaps to the eye of love when all the world is blind. The flower that opens slowly, the face grown dear through half of life, needs no tenure in memory. It lives. Years can not dim its beauty nor age destroy its grace, for the vision is part of him who sees.

The vision came to Lewis. His arms trembled to grip Natalie, to outrage her trust, and seize too lightly the promise of the years.

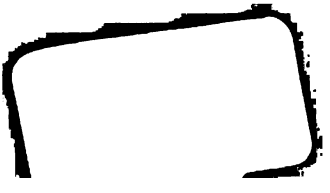
"Now, Nat?" he said hoarsely. He raised his hands slowly, took off her hat, and tossed it aside. Then with trembling fingers he let down her hair. It tumbled about her shoulders in a gold and copper glory of light and shade. Natalie did not stir. Lewis caught up a handful of her hair and held it against his cheek. "Now," he said, "I stay here. Since long before the day you said that you and I would sail together to the biggest island you 've held my hand, and I 've held yours. Sometimes I 've forgotten, but—but I 've never really let go. I 'll not let go now. I 'll cling to you, walk beside you, live with you, hand in hand, until the day you know me through and through.

"And then?" whispered Natalie.

"Then I 'll love you," said Lewis, gravely. "For me

you hold all the seven worlds of women. I 've—I 've been walking with my back to the light.

Natalie laughed — the soft laughter with which women choke back tears. She put up her hands and drew Lewis's head against her breast.

THE END

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